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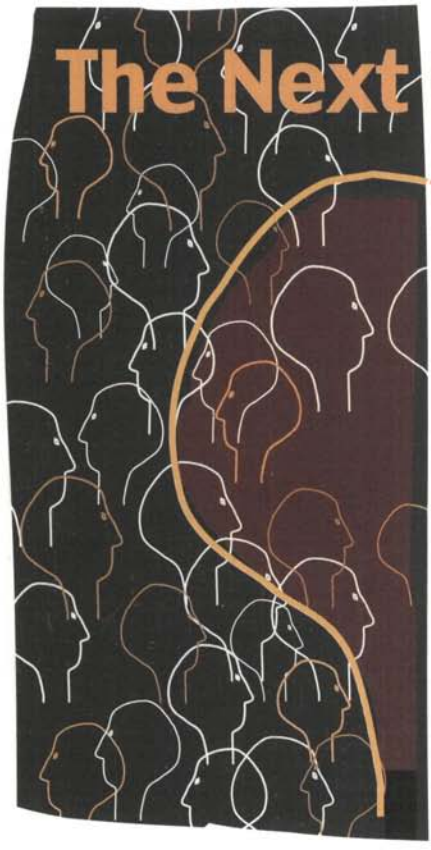

## The Next Generation

### Work in Progress

D. Graham Burnett • Catherine Epstein • Tarek E. Masoud
Douglas McGray • Jamie Frederic Metzl • Samantha Power
Serenella Sferza • Maya Todeschini

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# The Next Generation: Work in Progress

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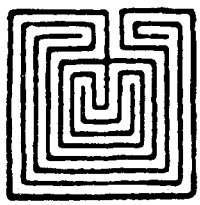

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# Preface to the Issue "The Next Generation: Work in Progress"

AS THOSE WHO READ *DÆDALUS* KNOW, the Journal's usual practice is to devote each issue to a single subject. Occasionally, however, there are compelling reasons for doing something that we have done only very occasionally in the past—collecting essays on disparate themes and publishing them together. This tradition, which goes back to an early issue of *Dædalus* from the summer of 1959, is being revived with this issue. Its title, "The Next Generation: Work in Progress," if it seems somewhat obscure to some, clearly calls for further explanation.

The distinctive feature of this collection is that all of the essays originate with men and women who are only now beginning their professional careers. To say that they are all young is to belabor the obvious. Because *Dædalus* has always been proud to publish the works of younger individuals, because it has never seen its purpose to be the repeated publication of essays from a relatively small stable of well-known and very senior scholars, it is fitting that this issue should make that fact even more explicit. These men and women, recommended by those who have taught them and known them, have chosen to



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write on very diverse matters. Several relate to some of the more violent events of this chaotic century, giving them a dimension that earlier scholars neglected. Some, much more preoccupied with conditions that obtain today, are able to provide insight and information not commonly available through the mass media. A few, while not seeking explicitly to be prophetic, are in fact concerned with what may be impending, with what new technologies possibly portend. One of the essays recalls a debate that once greatly agitated scholars in both the sciences and the humanities—the discussion opened by C. P. Snow's celebrated lecture in 1959 on "The Two Cultures."

We are constantly told that the new generation is ahistorical, that it is too little concerned with those questions that once so agitated men and women in the past. Not the least of the contributions of this issue of *Dædalus* may be that it argues for some revision of that commonly held view. If historical scholarship has changed and is changing—if the methods and questions of yesterday are not always as compelling as they once were—this does not suggest that historical scholarship has lost its earlier savor. One of the possibilities too rarely considered today is that history, and particularly the history of this century, may be one of the more preoccupying academic concerns of intellectual men and women in the coming decades, and that contributions to that history will come from scholars and others in many parts of the world.

Support for this issue of *Dædalus* has come entirely from individuals. It is a pleasure to thank Marc Leland, Edwin McAmis, Irving Rabb, and Malcolm Wiener for what they have done to make this issue possible, but also for their support of two other publications: a history, "*Dædalus*: Forty Years On," and a comprehensive index of the 164 *Dædalus* issues published since 1958.

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*Catherine Epstein*

# The Politics of Biography: The Case of East German Old Communists

"BIOGRAPHY, LIKE BIG GAME HUNTING, is one of the recognized forms of sport; and it is as unfair as only sport can be." So wrote Philip Guedalla, an English historian, in 1920.[1] Guedalla's quip refers to the practice of writing biography, but it also captures the spirit of a significant but little-noted phenomenon: the exploitation of biography for political ends. In this century of war, revolution, dictatorship, and genocide, personal experience has often become the measure of moral and political reputation. In dramatic, often cataclysmic times, individuals—as soldiers or civilians, victims or perpetrators, revolutionaries or reactionaries—have made choices according to chance, destiny, or moral-political persuasion. In subsequent political regimes, the biographies that emerged from those choices constituted political authority or, just as frequently, political opprobrium. To return to Guedalla's metaphor of biography as game hunting, the use and abuse of biography has been an oft-played sport in twentieth-century politics. And, in many respects, it has been unfair. Biography is a sitting target; nothing can alter the facts of a life already lived. Moreover, the rules of the sport—what constitutes a "good" or "bad" biography—change both according to the regime in power and current political climate.

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The term "biography" has two rather different meanings. It can refer to the lived experience of an individual, or it can refer to the text or description of the life of an individual. Both meanings are relevant to a discussion of the politics of biography. The former has received much attention; the latter, rather little. Historians have long argued that biographical experience, often phrased in generational terms, shapes future political views and mores. The experience of trench warfare in World War I, for example, radicalized the generation of 1914—both to the left and to the right. Historians have also long asserted that political conflict emerges when generations shaped by profound yet disparate experiences coexist in a single polity. The generation of 1968, for example, challenged the postwar consensus forged by its elders after 1945; this has had lasting political consequences in the United States and Europe.

The historian's repertoire has not featured the politics of biography as text. Biography, like all texts, lends itself to different and multiple readings, and thus to revision and manipulation. The twentieth century has seen a particularly widespread (re)interpretation of past biography for political purposes. This practice has worked to demonize past forms of rule, to legitimate new political regimes, and to consolidate ongoing political orders; it has also helped undermine governments, as we shall see.

In the aftermath of regime transition, new political authorities have attributed negative qualities to the biographical experiences of old leaders or past adversaries. In this process, big game, that is, leading political figures, are not the only ones targeted; small game or, to mix metaphors, small fry also see their biographies reworked in negative ways. After 1989, for example, thousands of individuals who had worked as state informants in the former communist states of Eastern Europe were roundly disgraced. The gauge of biography brought these individuals legal and financial disadvantage: in Germany and the Czech Republic, past informants were barred from holding jobs in the state sector and faced discrimination from private employers. These measures were intended to eliminate the influence of old communist elites on postcommunist regimes. At the same time, the biographies of past informants came to

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represent the evil incarnate in totalitarian rule: snooping on friends, colleagues, and even lovers symbolized par excellence the totalitarian state's reprehensible intrusion in citizens' lives.

Past biography also plays a positive role in the legitimation of new regimes. It may, for example, bestow enormous political authority on an individual politician; indeed, near-universal admiration of a leader may be the single most important bond uniting a new polity. Vaclav Havel and Nelson Mandela, the two great moral statesmen of our time, enjoy tremendous authority at home and abroad precisely because of their past biographies. By accepting the consequences of "living in truth" as a Czech dissident, Havel emerged from the communist era uncompromised by the demands of a totalitarian regime. Mandela enjoys well-earned respect because of his lifelong sacrifice, including some three decades in South African jails, for the antiapartheid cause. The biographies of Havel and Mandela are particularly compelling because they reflect personal authenticity. In an age when being true to the self is a desire as ubiquitous as the condition is rare, Havel and Mandela, through their biographies, have proven themselves true. Indeed, the simple words that Lionel Trilling used to describe the authentic appeal of Rousseau also apply to each of these towering statesmen: "He is the man; he suffered; he was there."[2]

The politics of biography also works in other ways to help legitimate and consolidate new regimes. Paradoxically, ignoring past biographies may prove an effective method of regime consolidation. In postwar West Germany, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer disregarded the past Nazi biographies of some important political appointees. At the same time, leading politicians who had resisted the Nazis won little respect for their past biographies—indeed, quite the opposite. In the 1950s and early 1960s, it was a political liability that Willy Brandt, later West German Chancellor, had engaged in resistance activity and then emigrated to Scandinavia during the Third Reich. Brandt's biography suggested what most Germans wished to forget: that resistance to the Nazis had indeed been possible. Official disregard for both Nazi and resistance biographies helped ensure the loyalty of almost all Germans to the new West German state.

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This politics of biography thus proved a successful integrative strategy for the new West German order.

The politics of biography may also be profoundly divisive. Changes in political sensibility shift the valences of past biography that, in turn, may shake stable Western democracies—not to speak of wobbly authoritarian dictatorships. By the 1980s, for example, past deeds committed under the authority of the Nazi regime were judged much more harshly than in earlier decades. When Kurt Waldheim, United Nations Secretary-General from 1972 to 1981, ran for the Austrian presidency in 1986, his candidacy became controversial when it was revealed that he had served as a German army staff officer in the Balkans from 1942 to 1945 (Waldheim had long claimed that he had studied law in Vienna during these years). Waldheim's unit, it turned out, had not only engaged in nasty reprisals against Yugoslav partisans and civilians, but also deported most of the Jewish population of Salonika to Nazi death camps in 1943. Despite considerable contention, Waldheim refused to give up his presidential candidacy. Indeed, his obstinacy only served to heighten his popularity in many Austrian quarters—and the divisions within Austrian society. While Waldheim won the election, he was roundly ostracized by the international community during his presidency. Austria's reputation abroad suffered accordingly. In this case, the politics of biography also had international repercussions.

The trial of Maurice Papon illustrates how biographies once deemed respectable may become criminalized. In postwar France, Papon, former Secretary-General of the Gironde during the Nazi occupation of France, held such illustrious posts as head of the prefecture of police in Paris under de Gaulle and Budget Minister under Giscard d'Estaing. But now the honorable aspects of his wartime biography—his cooperation with the Resistance by the end of 1943, his sheltering of an important Jewish *résistant*, and the fact that he turned the Gironde over to the Resistance at Liberation—have been overshadowed by his role in the deportation of Jews between 1942 and 1944.[3] The Papon case provoked a bitter national discussion about French complicity in the Nazi occupation of France. It also demon-

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strated how new scrutiny of long-venerated biographies may challenge the reputation of entrenched elites.

From a theoretical perspective, it may come as a surprise that communist regimes have also engaged in the exploitation of biography for political ends. Communist ideology, after all, emphasizes the role of impersonal forces in history writ large. And communism is aggressively future-oriented, seeking legitimacy through future promise rather than past performance. But even Lenin acknowledged the practical and symbolic importance of the biographies of party cadres. In *What Is to Be Done?*, a 1902 polemic on how to unleash revolution in Russia, Lenin called for a vanguard of professional revolutionaries, made up of a "small, compact core of the most reliable, experienced, and hardened workers."[4] Two of the attributes that Lenin cited, "experienced" and "hardened," referred directly to the past experiences of those in the revolutionary vanguard. Lenin also recognized the ways in which biography as text was important for the revolutionary movement. In a piece written in 1906, Lenin declared that young workers needed examples of authority in "the experience of old *fighters* against oppression and exploitation, of fighters who have participated in many strikes and in a series of revolutions, who have adopted revolutionary traditions and acquired a broad political vision."[5] The lives of "old fighters," Lenin thus suggested, were important models of revolutionary conduct; they also represented a treasury of revolutionary know-how. As we shall see, Lenin's successors in Russia and beyond privileged and exploited the biographies of other "old fighters."

The communist exploitation of revolutionary biographies was perhaps nowhere so prevalent as in East Germany. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), "Old Communists" were those who had joined the German Communist Party (KPD) prior to Hitler's rise to power in 1933.[6] They had joined the KPD at a time when party membership entailed risk rather than reward; during the Weimar Republic, communists were the outcasts of the nation. After the Nazis came to power, communists, after Jews, were the most persecuted group in Germany. During the Third Reich, they participated in all matter of antifascist activity: they engaged in illegal resistance, fought

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with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, suffered imprisonment in Nazi jails and concentration camps, and emigrated to the Soviet Union or Western countries to fight the antifascist struggle abroad.

Old Communists had jeopardized their lives for their political convictions. The pathos of their biographies spoke to genuineness. Furthermore, the terror that they had experienced had left its mark on their bodies and personalities. They were prematurely aged; decades after the fact, Old Communists suffered palpably from the physical abuse they had endured during the Nazi era. And, as younger East Germans discovered, Old Communists were gritty, hard-edged characters who stopped at nothing to further their political aims. Their personalities seemed laced with a steel forged from iron political convictions. If nothing else, Old Communists, rather like Havel and Mandela, were authentic.

After 1945, biography lent Old Communists enormous personal and political prestige in East Germany. Throughout the forty-four-year history of the GDR, Old Communists occupied the most important positions in the East German party and state bureaucracies. Wilhelm Pieck, Walter Ulbricht, and Erich Honecker—the chairmen of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the GDR's ruling communist party—were all Old Communists. The longtime Minister for State Security, Erich Mielke, was an Old Communist. Old Communists were highly overrepresented in the Politburo and the Central Committee. Many of the regime's leading novelists, artists, actors, and intellectuals were Old Communists. Finally, the GDR's most prominent dissident, the physicist Robert Havemann, was an Old Communist. Old Communists, then, not only dominated GDR political and cultural life; they even defined the limits of East German political discourse.

The power and prestige enjoyed by Old Communists was paralleled in the other Eastern European Soviet satellite states. As in the GDR, prewar communists in Eastern Europe numbered a tiny minority of communist party members, but their influence outsized their small numbers. Until the 1980s, every leader of Eastern Europe's ruling communist parties had been involved in communist politics before 1945; in most cases, these

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leaders had joined a communist party well before 1933. They, too, had all been active in the antifascist struggle against Nazi Germany. The symbolic importance of East German Old Communists nonetheless ranged well beyond that of most of their counterparts in Eastern Europe. Unlike other Eastern European communist parties, the SED could not draw on the "nation" for legitimacy: East Germany constituted only a small third of the German nation; the Berlin Wall, the GDR's most famous landmark, had only deepened the national divide; and the invocation of German history was ill-suited for progressive purposes since, unlike Eastern European nations, Germans had not been subject to centuries of national oppression. The symbolic importance of Old Communists was only paralleled in multinational Yugoslavia, where the communist leadership was also hard put to appeal to the "nation." There the "Partisan Generation"—whose members had fought with Tito against the German occupation during World War II—served as the functional equivalent of East German Old Communists. As the historian Gale Stokes has suggested, Marxist ideology, Tito's person, and the commemoration of the partisan experience "provided the glue that kept Yugoslavia together."[7] In both Yugoslavia and East Germany, revolutionary tradition was substituted for national interests proclaimed elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

As survivors of the antifascist struggle against Hitler, Old Communists embodied the SED regime's claims to legitimacy. But for the SED the antifascist struggle had not been a mere fight against a racist dictatorship. It had had much greater significance. In Marxist-Leninist ideology, fascism represents the most reactionary, chauvinistic, and imperialistic form of monopoly capitalism; the socialist triumph against the Nazis had thus been a defining moment in the teleological march of History. This understanding of fascism led the party to downplay the centrality of the Holocaust in Nazi policy and ideology. (The SED, for example, argued that since the GDR had extirpated fascism on East German soil, it bore no responsibility for Nazi crimes.) For our purposes, however, the most important consequence of the SED's understanding of fascism was that it raised the communist resistance to Hitler to epic proportions. In the SED's cosmology, the communist struggle against fascism

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was *the* drama of the Nazi era. According to party propaganda, the KPD, directed by Moscow, had forged and led a unified, triumphant antifascist resistance to the Nazis. Party ideologues trumpeted the legendary sacrifice and suffering of communists and other antifascists: against great odds and in the face of untold dangers, communists had engaged in underground acts of resistance in both freedom and captivity.

For all the hoopla surrounding KPD heroics during the Nazi years, SED myth and the true history of communist activity during the Nazi era were at considerable odds. While individual communists had acted with great courage, the KPD's collective role had involved little heroism and much suffering. Although illicit KPD activity had never really posed a serious threat to Hitler's regime, tens of thousands of communists had landed behind Nazi prison bars. Contrary to KPD/SED lore, most communists had spent much of the Nazi era not as active resisters but as inmates of German prisons and concentration camps. In the camps, some communists had assumed so-called *Kapo* (prison-guard) functions; they had thus been somewhat complicit in upholding the brutal camp order. Those communists in Soviet exile, on the other hand, had lived in fear during the Great Purges, while those in Western emigration had been involved in only marginal political activity. The SED myth of communist antifascist heroism overlooked the historical record in other ways as well. The KPD never led a unified antifascist resistance movement between 1933 and 1945; no such movement ever existed. And it was Allied armies, not communist resistance, that toppled the Nazi regime.

The historical record notwithstanding, the SED claimed the tradition of antifascist struggle as one of its main sources of legitimacy. In turn, the heroes of this tradition—both communist martyrs and Old Communist survivors—were claimed to embody all matter of revolutionary virtue: courage, loyalty, perseverance, and burning political passion. The SED established a number of institutions and practices to popularize the antifascist struggle and its heroes. The myth of past communist heroics was portrayed in films, novels, museums, memorials, textbooks, public rituals, and other "*lieux de mémoire*."[8] Moreover, Old Communists were intimately involved in the cult of

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their biographies. In 1953, for example, the SED founded the Committee of Anti-Fascist Resistance Fighters in the GDR. This Committee, headed and staffed by many Old Communists, organized events, exhibitions, and memoir or other anthologies to commemorate the past antifascist struggle. Old Communists were encouraged to write their memoirs, as will be discussed below. They were urged to participate in the party institutions that gathered information on local antifascist history, the Commissions for the Research of the History of the Workers' Movement. And they were called upon to speak about their past revolutionary exploits to schoolchildren, young workers, and members of the East German armed forces. The popularization of Old Communist biographies was intended to transmit the SED's political ethos to younger East Germans; in this respect, the cult of Old Communist biographies belongs to the long tradition of hagiography as a source of moral instruction. But just as in hagiography, Old Communists and their biographies lost all individuality; their lives were melded into a stereotypical, archetypal biography of communist resistance and redemption.

The biographies of Old Communists were not only used to popularize the revolutionary values of the SED regime. They were also invoked to legitimate current socialist policies. For the SED, the antifascist struggle was not only history. According to SED ideologues, East Germany was locked in a bitter, ongoing confrontation with "fascist" West Germany. The lessons of the past antifascist struggle thus had present-day significance; so too did the biographies of Old Communists and other antifascists. In 1958, the official slogan to celebrate the opening of the Buchenwald Memorial, East Germany's main site for the commemoration of the antifascist struggle, thus proclaimed: "Glory and honor to the heroes of the resistance struggle and the victims of fascist terror!" It continued, "They admonish the peoples of the world to defend the greatest good of humanity—peace!"[9] The biographies of Old Communists—the fact that they had had to suffer through a hellish war at the hands of a fascist regime—were thus exploited to remind East Germans of the bellicose threat posed by Western revanchism.

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The message of Old Communist biographies was as simple as it was direct: uphold the socialist system, or else.

In the GDR, Old Communists commanded power and prestige because of their past biographies; they also enjoyed financial and other rewards. Since the nineteenth century, states have rewarded past biographical experience by paying pensions and other benefits to war veterans. Our century of dramatic upheaval, though, has created whole new categories of experience entitling individuals to reward or compensation. Indeed, the entitled self—often by virtue of biography—has become a staple of our age. Whether former slave laborers in Nazi Germany or Japanese-Americans interned during World War II, individuals with a variety of biographical experiences demand compensation. In the currency of our times, only material reward seems able to restore lost dignity and respect. It is, however, politics that determines which experiences will be deemed worthy of compensation. The GDR, for example, did not grant benefits to veterans of World Wars I and II; the SED did not consider fighting for Imperial or Nazi Germany worthy of such honor. Instead, the party privileged a different category of veteran: "veterans" of the German working-class movement. Among other honorary pensions given to "party veterans," the SED granted monthly pensions to past "fighters against fascism." In part, these pensions were to compensate Old Communists and other antifascists for the very real material losses that they had sustained in the years before 1945. Yet by the 1980s, these pensions amounted to princely sums (by GDR standards). Former antifascist fighters also received extra vacation days, free public transportation throughout the GDR, preferential medical treatment, and burial in special cemeteries. In addition, the children of antifascist fighters received supplementary stipends to support university and other studies. And even after antifascist fighters died, their dependents continued to receive their generous pensions and other benefits. These practices thus created something of an East German hereditary class based not on noble birth but on antifascist biography.

In the GDR, then, biography lent Old Communists power, prestige, and privilege. As proven communists, they dominated GDR institutions. They set the political tone of the regime.

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Their past lives were accorded honor and respect. And, in terms of material goods, they enjoyed the best that the regime had to offer: besides the perquisites noted above, Old Communists were privileged in the distribution of housing, cars, and other sought-after items. In addition, the SED, with the active participation of Old Communists themselves, exploited the biographies of party veterans to transmit communist values and boost current policies. In the GDR, it would seem, the politics of biography served Old Communists well.

Paradoxically, however, biography also worked in a number of ways against Old Communists and, ultimately, their regime. Although the party invoked the biographies of Old Communists to legitimate its order, it also deployed biography against these longtime revolutionaries. In perhaps the most peculiar feature of the politics of biography in the GDR, SED authorities actually manipulated the biographies of Old Communists to discipline veteran communists. The use of biography as a disciplinary strategy rested on a particular kind of biographical text: the personnel file. The SED, like other Soviet-style communist parties, maintained personnel files on its members. These files included all matter of personal information, including detailed curricula vitae and autobiographical statements; in a sense, these files provided the party with a virtual Panopticon on the past lives of party members. Again and again, for example, Old Communists were compelled to restate their socioeconomic background, illegal activity, imprisonment during the Weimar or Nazi years, activity during emigration, and much, much more. According to guidelines on party punishments, the stating of false biographical information was to be "particularly harshly judged," and altering facts from one curriculum vitae to the next was a punishable offense.[10] However, while biographical facts constituted a permanent file, their significance was malleable. As the Austrian sociologist Klaus-Georg Riegel argues, the interpretations of biographical facts "change according to the political situation, the position of the cadre in the apparat, the degree of power of his faction. . ." and so on. An Old Communist's personnel file, then, presented much potential evidence for "denunciations, investigations, repressions, censures, warnings, and disciplinings."[11] Furthermore, information

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found in these files was often deemed suspicious only years later.

In the early 1950s, in the heyday of postwar Stalinism, Soviet and SED authorities pored over the past biographies of Old Communists in search of biographical facts that lent themselves to sinister manipulation. This process was paralleled in other Eastern European states; the Rajk and Slánský trials in Hungary and Czechoslovakia were but the tip of an iceberg of biographical revisions with chilling political repercussions. In the GDR and elsewhere, for example, communist officials demonized innocent contacts between communists and an American relief worker, Noel Field, in Southern France in the early 1940s. Communist authorities now claimed that Field was a master spy engaged in a wide-ranging conspiracy to undermine socialism. All those with even casual past links to Field were accused of working on behalf of "imperialist" and "Zionist" intelligence agencies. For those thirty or so Old Communists drawn into the Noel Field Affair, the experience was as wrenching as it was inexplicable. Paul Baender, for example, a former West émigré and a high official in the Ministry for Trade and Supply, was arrested by SED authorities in 1952. During subsequent interrogations, Baender was accused of belonging to a group of conspirators long intent on "deforming the party and delivering the GDR to imperialism." His interrogators questioned countless details of his past life, casting suspicion on virtually every detail of his biography. As Baender later recounted: "I was gradually given a totally different biography. It was presented as reality again and again." He added, "I came into an indescribable state. I was on the verge of committing suicide."[12]

Even Politburo members were subject to a malicious reworking of their past biographies. In 1953, Franz Dahlem, one of the most powerful SED leaders, was purged on account of alleged infractions in his biography. Dahlem was charged with biographical iniquities that he had allegedly committed as head of the KPD Central Committee Secretariat in Paris in 1938 and 1939. In August of 1939, when French authorities demanded that all foreigners register with the police, Dahlem had urged KPD members to comply. As a result, many German commu-

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nists soon found themselves in French internment camps, from which they were later deported to German concentration camps. Dahlem himself was interned by French authorities in 1939, handed over to the Germans in 1942, interrogated for months at gestapo headquarters in Berlin, and then deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp. He survived these travails and, after 1945, was one of the three or four most powerful KPD/SED functionaries. In 1953, Dahlem was nonetheless publicly accused of past "liquidation policies," that is, of allowing the murder of communist cadres by initiating the steps that led to their deportation to Germany. He was also charged with demonstrating "insufficient trust in the Soviet Union" because he had encouraged communist registration with French police authorities even though France was "Soviet-hostile." He was further accused of demonstrating "total blindness towards attempts by imperialist agents to infiltrate the party," a reference to his brief postwar contact with Noel Field. And he was charged with conducting himself poorly during gestapo interrogations and, in the Mauthausen concentration camp, of stalling an armed uprising by camp inmates in 1945.[13] These alleged biographical iniquities not only cost Dahlem his Politburo seat; they also robbed him of his much-cherished revolutionary honor and reputation. Dahlem would spend the rest of his long life—he died only in 1981—seeking the rehabilitation of his revolutionary past.

The revision of veteran communists' biographies did not stop with those Old Communists who had emigrated to Western countries during the Nazi era. Only the biographies of former émigrés to the Soviet Union seemed immune to negative biographical revision. Spanish Civil War veterans, for example, saw their biographies of heroic combat invalidated. During the early 1950s, the GDR media ignored the military exploits of the International Brigades. Even Old Communists who had been in Nazi prisons and concentration camps saw their past biographies undermined. Some of these Old Communists were now accused of timid or faltering conduct in Nazi captivity. While the ideal Old Communist was a "hardened revolutionary," "steeled in struggle," some Old Communists were now accused of "falling apart" and "becoming soft" under Nazi duress. Old

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Communists thus saw their past lives stripped of masculinity. Given the communist celebration of resolute, muscle-rippled cadres, Old Communists took such challenges to their masculinity very seriously indeed; those accused of cowardly behavior spent years trying to convince party authorities that their conduct had, in fact, been otherwise.

In other cases of willful biographical manipulation, party authorities took a biographical fact that was true enough but then monstrously distorted its context or significance. For example, SED officials charged Old Communists with betrayal of the communist cause if, under torture, they had divulged the names of fellow comrades. In fact, Old Communists had frequently "betrayed" fellow comrades whom they knew to be abroad or already under arrest. Party officials also charged Old Communists of collaboration with the Nazis if they had, on their release from captivity, signed pledges to cooperate with the gestapo. But communists had to sign such statements to secure their release; they had had no intention of keeping their pledges and, in any event, gestapo files showed that they had made very poor informants indeed.

While the vast majority of such alleged biographical transgressions were absurd, some involved an element or two of equivocal truth. As noted earlier, some KPD members had assumed prison-guard functions in the concentration camps. In the 1940s, party authorities had not questioned the ethics of communists performing *Kapo* functions, nor had they challenged the KPD strategy of saving communist lives over those of other prisoners. In 1950, though, both Soviet and SED officials suddenly held communists who had survived the Buchenwald concentration camp accountable for their past actions. For example, the former head of the camp sick bay, Ernst Busse, an agricultural functionary, was accused, among other crimes, of compiling lists of prisoners for medical experiments and in the process saving German communists at the expense of Soviet prisoners of war. When interrogated, Busse defended his actions by arguing that "SS measures resulting in the mass extermination of prisoners did not touch us [i.e., communists]."[14] As Busse (correctly) stated, survival rates for German communists in Buchenwald were very high. Soviet authorities were dis-

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mayed by this past communist conduct. In 1950, Busse was deported to the *Gulag*, where he died some years later.

Scores of Old Communists faced serious reprisals because of the negative revision of their biographies. Among the dozen or so Old Communists arrested and imprisoned for their supposed past iniquities, two (Busse and Willy Kreikemeyer) died as a result of mistreatment suffered in communist captivity. Several Old Communists committed suicide so as to avoid the disgrace of a compromised biography. Numerous Old Communists lost their political functions and, of these, many were banned to the East German provinces. All of these Old Communists were deprived of a most treasured possession, their revolutionary biographies. In most cases, Old Communists had never had the opportunity to acquire professional skills—their biographies were what they had to offer to the new regime. Now, however, they lost even this asset. Why?

The negative reworking of Old Communist biographies served two main purposes. On the one hand, these malicious manipulations were to ensure that no single Old Communist enjoyed an independent revolutionary charisma. There was to be no German Gomułka. In East Germany, there could be only one hero in the legendary antifascist resistance struggle: the party. Individual heroes, it seems, would detract from the legendary collective achievements of the party. The logic of party legitimacy thus required public heroes who were secretly branded traitors. While party authorities propagated an idealized image of the Old Communist resistance fighter, they assiduously undermined the antifascist credentials of real, individual Old Communists.

On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, these purges were part and parcel of a disciplinary regime that party authorities imposed on veteran communists. Just like former émigrés to the Soviet Union during Stalin's Great Purges, Old Communists with other past experiences were to feel themselves at the mercy of the party's incontestable power; this was their rite of party submission. At the same time, there was an intimate relationship between the glorified public image of the communist resister and the largely secret manipulation of the biographical pasts of Old Communists. In this disciplinary regime, the public revolutionary ideal set a standard against

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which Old Communists measured their own conduct during the Nazi years. Given that survival in Nazi terror institutions entailed a gray moral zone, Old Communists could only fall short of the revolutionary ideal propagated by their regime. Old Communists internalized the chasm between their own, often compromised biographies and that of the popularized revolutionary ideal. To make up for their past failures, Old Communists strove to be more perfect, more disciplined communists. They did not wish to deviate from ideal communist norms again. In the 1950s, biography proved a potent disciplinary weapon against Old Communists. SED leaders thus did not need to worry about challenges to the party's rule from the Old Communist cohort. Biography as discipline thus helped consolidate the SED regime.

In later decades, SED officials manipulated another form of biographical text that concerned Old Communists—memoirs.[15] Party officials encouraged Old Communists to write their memoirs so as to foster an official memory of antifascist struggle. During the East German years, some sixty Old Communists published full-scale memoirs, while about three hundred Old Communists wrote memoirs or memoir-fragments now found in SED party archives. Despite the high numbers of memoirs written and published by Old Communists, memoir-writing and publication was an area of great tension between veteran communists and their regime. All too often, the memories of Old Communists did not match official memory. Furthermore, Old Communists and party ideologues had competing goals for these memoirs. The politics of Old Communist memoirs thus adds another dimension to the politics of biography in East Germany.

In the GDR, the publication of memoirs by veteran communists was no trifling thing; it was an affair of state. Inevitably, such memoirs had to avoid aspects of communist history deemed sensitive—or even taboo—by SED leaders. Old Communists recalled Stalin's Great Purges, the 1939 Nazi–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the East German purges of the 1950s, and slights and disappointments encountered in the postwar years. As one Old Communist, Cläre Quast, once wrote, "It is by no means always so easy to write memoirs that not only should accord

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with the truth, but that simultaneously should depict the situation in those days."[16] Quast spoke to the difficulty inherent in writing memoirs that reflected the party's line on past events (the "truth") and also faithfully recorded past events. Furthermore, Old Communists frequently failed to produce those memories that SED authorities wished them to have. For example, Sepp Hahn, an inmate in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp during the Nazi years, vividly remembered atrocities committed by the SS but did not particularly remember episodes of communist solidarity and resistance. Although Hahn's memoir manuscript was praised for its intention, it was criticized for its execution. According to an Institute for Marxism-Leninism (IML) staff member, Hahn had overemphasized SS barbarities while neglecting organized communist resistance:

> But there are also severe gaps in your manuscript. . . . This observation refers specifically to the still insufficient portrayal of the political work of our comrades imprisoned in Sachsenhausen C[oncentration] C[amp]. (Not until page 14 do you report on the conscious work of the communists.) We are of the opinion that the very broad depiction of examples of the barbaric terror of the SS must not push the political activity of comrades into the background. What matters most is to pay tribute to the uncompromising stance of communists, their great solidarity with foreign prisoners and the common struggle of all antifascists against the SS.[17]

Although Hahn did not remember his camp experiences as the IML wished, he eventually suppressed his own memories and wrote an account that accorded with official SED memory of camp life.

To encourage the writing of memoirs that met the demands of party ideologues, the SED established a Memoir Section at the IML, the party's premiere institute for ideology. The Memoir Section directed the writing, collection, and publication of memoirs by veteran communists. It also developed procedures to solicit memoirs from Old Communists and other antifascists. IML staff members first made up lists of potential memoir authors. They then sent these lists to the IML's administration for approval. Once approved, staff members met with potential authors. At the end of such meetings, flattered longtime revolutionaries usually agreed to write at least a memoir fragment.

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To help in the actual writing of memoirs, IML staff members then compiled lists of events that the author might cover or provided contemporary documents from the period about which the author was writing. According to a 1981 account by an IML staff member, "The purpose of these measures consists in refreshing the memory of the author, strengthening his ability to remember, and steering [that ability] in the appropriate direction of the topic."[18] It was, in fact, the prompting of memories that was the IML's central concern. Old Communists were not asked to record what they remembered. Instead, they were told what to remember and how to structure their memories in a predetermined historical narrative.

With memoir publication, Old Communists and party authorities pursued very different goals. Whereas party ideologues wished to celebrate a collective biographical ideal, Old Communists were intent on memorializing and sometimes even rehabilitating their past revolutionary biographies. Since public acknowledgement symbolized official favor in the communist world, the publication of a memoir was taken to signify the official rehabilitation of its author. This dramatically raised the stakes of memoir publication for all concerned. In April of 1974, the SED leadership decreed that the party's Secretariat had to approve the publication of all memoirs by current and past members of the Central Committee, as well as those by comrades "who had or have a deep knowledge of the internal affairs of the party or state leadership."[19] The timing of this decree suggests that the SED leadership was particularly concerned about the potential publication of a number of memoirs by Old Communists bent on seeking official rehabilitation.

Old Communists who had been purged for alleged biographical shortcomings were especially eager to publish their memoirs. Indeed, they generally wished to publish accounts about precisely those periods of their past lives for which they had been purged in the 1950s and 1960s. The most striking case of memoir publication as rehabilitation was a massive two-volume memoir by Franz Dahlem, *Am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (On the Eve of the Second World War), published in 1977.[20] In this autobiography, Dahlem painstakingly recounted his life in Paris in 1938 and 1939. This work culminated

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in a two-hundred-page description of his decision to have German communists register with the French police in August 1939—the ostensible cause of his 1953 downfall. As the director of the IML, Günter Heyden, noted in a memorandum: "With these memoirs the author is pursuing the goal of achieving a *full* personal rehabilitation. . . ."[21] But Dahlem's memoirs were not only intended to restore his own revolutionary honor; they were also meant to restore the revolutionary laurels of all former West émigrés purged in the early 1950s. Dahlem thus wrote numerous laudatory portraits of these formerly disgraced Old Communists. In addition, Dahlem wished to print criticism of Walter Ulbricht, a discussion of the Great Purges, and numerous mentions of the decrees that had savaged his own past biography in the early 1950s. For the SED leadership, however, these topics were too sensitive and, as the published text demonstrates, unacceptable for publication in the GDR. To publish his memoirs, Dahlem had to modify his memoirs to suit party leaders. As this Old Communist wrote to party leader Erich Honecker in 1975, "Above all in the interest of political necessities, but also in the interest of seeing the publication [of my memoirs] during my lifetime, we [i.e., Dahlem and chief ideologist Kurt Hager] agreed not to publish some of my statements, which was not always easy for me." Dahlem then added, "But I was, am, and remain a disciplined comrade, for whom the party interest as well as the party's unity and accord was and is always a sacred cause."[22] Like so many other Old Communists, Dahlem published his memoirs but compromised his remembered life. In the Byzantine style of the GDR, he had nonetheless achieved a number of his goals: he rehabilitated many purged Old Communists; justified his own past actions as a KPD leader; and, most importantly, saw his own revolutionary reputation restored.

In the GDR, individuals who wrote autobiographies did not structure or determine the meaning of their past lives. The SED mediated the meaning attached to all East German biographies. Old Communists, however, quite happily allowed the SED to denote the significance of their biographies. This was true even when, as with Franz Dahlem, they also tried to use their biographies for their own purposes. Like Dahlem, Old Communists

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were first and foremost disciplined communists for whom party loyalty superseded individual ambition. As the famous communist mantra went, "The party is always right." Old Communists also knew that it was the party that had made their lives meaningful or "worthwhile."[23] Their lives took on broad significance only in the context of the party's struggle for socialism, that is, only if inscribed in the master narrative of German communist history. Old Communists thus subscribed to the meaning that the party attached to their life experiences even when the memories imputed to them were at odds with their remembered experiences. The biographies of Old Communists thus belonged to the SED, which, in turn, made and unmade these biographies. In the uneven balance of power between veteran communists and their party, memoirs proved to be yet another biographical mechanism by which SED authorities controlled veteran party members.

While the SED used biography against Old Communists, biography also worked against the SED regime. Indeed, two sets of generational tensions—both related to Old Communist biographies—helped bring on the regime's demise. On the one hand, a generation of functionaries just younger than Old Communists, the so-called Hitler Youth generation, venerated Old Communists and their biographical experiences. Born between roughly 1925 and 1935, this generation grew up believing in Hitler and National Socialism, only to experience a shattered world in 1945. In that year, members of this generation witnessed not only military defeat but also personal tragedy in the form of rape, flight, loss of home, and family deaths. These events forced members of this generation to take on family and other responsibilities at a young age. In turn, this generation became preoccupied with professional security and stability. At the same time, wary of articulating its own political vision, it conformed to the new political orders in both East and West Germany. In the GDR, the SED successfully exploited this situation by "forgiving" the Hitler Youth generation the sins of its youth in return for loyalty to the new socialist regime. In the 1940s and 1950s, this generation thus experienced extraordinary social mobility: by the time they were in their thirties, members of this generation had often become professors, factory directors, or high-level functionaries.

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In the early GDR years, many members of the Hitler Youth generation experienced Old Communists as charismatic teachers, supervisors, and colleagues. They came to admire Old Communists as individuals who had suffered and sacrificed for their antifascist ideals. In contrast to their own compromised pasts, Old Communists had long been committed to a set of political ideals that seemed borne out by history. Members of this generation have frequently mentioned the charismatic influence that Old Communists had on them during the early years of the SED regime. Christa Wolf, perhaps East Germany's most renowned novelist, has said of longtime antifascists in the 1940s and 1950s that "at that time, for us there could not be more impressive people. . . ."[24] Similarly, Horst Grunert, a deputy foreign minister, stated of his first years in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

> I had the luck to meet splendid people who were my examples and from whom I learned a great deal: for example, Fritz Große, whose many years in jail and in concentration camps had ruined his health, but who now, after the liberation, was convinced that his ideals could be put into action. I think of Sepp Schwab, of Georg Stibi, all distinctive personalities with great charisma. Contact with them was marvelous, and criticism was practiced without harming human dignity.[25]

Große, Schwab, and Stibi were all Old Communists.

The admiration of Old Communists by the Hitler Youth generation often lasted throughout the GDR years. Even in the 1980s, with escalating foreign debt and flagging domestic morale, the Hitler Youth generation stood by the Old Communist leadership. Manfred Uschner, a personal assistant to Politburo member and Old Communist Hermann Axen, argues that functionaries of his generation stuck to the regime because

> there was the deepest respect for those leading personalities who emerged from the fascist concentration camps, and Soviet and Western exile, and who . . . initiated reconstruction and declared an antifascist order as their goal. In the postwar years, they convinced many people to actively fight against war, fascism, exploitation, and for social justice and a better life for the working people.[26]

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Egon Krenz, who succeeded Honecker in October 1989 as General Secretary of the SED, later spoke of the dilemmas that he had faced in challenging the Old Communist leadership. "I felt as if I were about to play Brutus. The older comrades had presented their power as a natural right after what they had suffered under fascism. That was deeply instilled in our political culture. It meant that we, the younger ones, did not have the right to challenge them."[27] Such views made the Hitler Youth generation reluctant, indeed even unable, to stand up to its Old Communist superiors. As a result, East Germany was left with both an aging leadership and a stagnant political system.

But another generational dynamic was also at work in East Germany. Younger East Germans—those born after 1945—found Old Communists and their policies hopelessly outdated. In his famous essay on generations, the German social theorist Karl Mannheim declared, "One is old primarily in so far as he comes to live within a specific, individually acquired, framework of useable past experience, so that every new experience has its form and its place largely marked out for it in advance." Noting that "biographical factors (such as youth and age) do not of themselves involve a definite intellectual or practical orientation (youth cannot be automatically correlated with a progressive attitude and so on). . . ," Mannheim suggested that being "old" could be measured by the limited range of responses that new situations and events evoked.[28] By the mid-1970s, Old Communists, particularly those who rested on the pinnacle of the SED's hierarchical pyramid, can only be described, in Mannheim's sense, as "old." They were hostage to an "antifascist" worldview that dated back to the Weimar Republic, a worldview confirmed by the experiences of Nazi persecution and Cold War confrontation. Old Communists saw a world divided into antagonistic camps of capitalists and communists, exploiters and exploited, fascists and antifascists. For Old Communists, an implacable class struggle constantly threatened a deadly confrontation between the supposedly peaceful socialist camp and the capitalist-imperialist Juggernaut. Old Communists also felt that the fulfillment of their youthful dreams—full employment, decent housing, and low prices for the basic necessities of life—would satisfy the GDR population.

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They thus had little appreciation for the population's growing appetite for better consumer goods. They had even less understanding for some East Germans' demands for democratic reforms, environmental responsibility, and peace based on "swords into plowshares."

Younger East Germans found it very difficult to identify with the antifascist life experiences of Old Communists. On the one hand, the juxtaposition of Old Communists' youthful revolutionary heroism with the political stagnation of their old age seemed incongruous. For younger East Germans, this inconsistency helped undermine the personal authenticity embodied by Old Communists. On the other hand, younger East Germans did not have the life experiences that made either the biographies of Old Communists or their antifascist agenda compelling. To younger East Germans, uncompromising hostility towards capitalist countries seemed irrelevant in a world imminently threatened by nuclear war and environmental disaster. As one younger East German wrote to an Old Communist, "Is it not so that we are simply forced to get along peacefully with our neighbors? Around us is a half-poisoned environment. . . . Are we really still in this world class struggle? Or only just our politicians? . . . Do we need hatred and the concept of an enemy in order to shoot other people dead?"[29] Some younger East Germans even explicitly stated that since they did not share the biographies of Old Communists, they could not share their political passions: "Hatred is the mother of war. I believe that we, who did not have to struggle against capitalism in the illegal resistance, who did not have to show all our courage, [who did not have to] act directly in life-threatening circumstances, [that] we can no longer sympathize with your hatred. . . ."[30] Having never personally experienced capitalism, younger East Germans were neither convinced that capitalism was pure evil, nor that socialism was inevitably the better system. For this generation, antifascism offered little inspiration.

The SED regime proved a tyranny of biography. The greatest strength of Old Communists—their antifascist biographies—preserved their position of power, but ultimately undermined their regime. The antifascist cult kept the Hitler Youth genera-

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tion of functionaries from stirring the stagnant waters of SED politics; they refused to challenge Old Communists or their policies. Moreover, the aging, inflexible Old Communist leadership was out of touch with the needs and desires of the GDR population. Antifascism, an ideology of the 1930s, had little appeal for younger East Germans of the 1980s. The antifascist biographies of Old Communists thus failed to inspire younger East Germans to embrace the socialist cause. Even as Gorbachev pursued policies that would cause the GDR's ultimate collapse, the tyranny of biography was undermining the SED's domestic legitimacy.

The story of the manipulation of Old Communist biographies did not end with the demise of the East German regime. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, Old Communist biographies, once revered icons of SED legitimacy, came to symbolize the disgraced SED regime. A number of high-level Old Communists were arrested and brought to trial for crimes they had allegedly committed in the GDR; they were charged with either corruption or manslaughter (for authorizing the shooting of East Germans attempting to flee the GDR). Furthermore, researchers discovered and publicized the less than heroic roles played by some Old Communists in the antifascist resistance to Hitler. Erich Honecker, who had always enjoyed a grudging respect for the ten years he spent in Nazi prisons, now saw his antifascist biography considerably weakened; it was alleged that Honecker betrayed fellow communist conspirators to the gestapo after his 1935 arrest.[31] The role of Old Communists in Hitler's concentration camps was also scrutinized anew. One historian showed how communist *Kapos* had helped run the Buchenwald concentration camp.[32] In 1996, a literary critic, Karl Corino, created a stir by proving that Stephan Hermlin, a famous lyricist, had embellished his antifascist past by lying about details of his biography.[33] Corino's findings, although not challenged on their merits, raised a storm of protest from Hermlin's defenders. Corino, they claimed, was a "liar" and suffered from "destruction rage." Hermlin himself, then eighty-one years old, argued that one had to distinguish between the good, helpful lies of communists and the evil, destructive lies of anticommunists.[34] The controversy not only

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hurt Hermlin's political and literary reputation but also underscored how Old Communists' biographies, the texts of their lives, continued to be highly politicized even after 1989.

The negative revision of the biographies of Old Communists also led to significant reductions in their monthly pensions. In 1992, the German parliament passed a law stipulating that the honorary pensions that Old Communists had collected as "fighters against fascism" would continue to be paid out. But the language of the law was indicative of the altered status of Old Communists in the new Germany. In the GDR, these pensions had been denoted as "honorary pensions" for "fighters" against fascism. They are now "compensation pensions" for "victims" of National Socialism. The new, passive designation of "victim" militates against the heroic, East German image of Old Communists as "fighters." As an author partial to the GDR cult of the antifascist resistance states: "Fighters have . . . become mere victims. . . . [They] are explicitly no longer *honored*, but instead reluctantly *compensated*."[35] In fact, these pensions are an even more complicated matter. The 1992 law stipulated that "compensation pensions" were not to be paid out to individuals who had violated principles of humanity or the rule of law or who had abused official positions for personal gain. Those thus found to have been "close to the system" (*systemnah*), as many Old Communists allegedly were, are to receive pensions that place them well below the official German poverty line.[36] While their antifascist biographies once assured them a secure retirement, many surviving Old Communists now face significant financial hardship—once again, due to their biographies.

One group of Old Communists saw a positive reinterpretation of their biographies after 1989. Those Old Communists who had been purged by SED authorities now came to represent the "good" communists pushed aside by evil Stalinists. In November 1989 and the months thereafter, the SED and its successor, the PDS, rehabilitated numerous Old Communists who had been purged during the East German years. Among those rehabilitated were Walter Janka and Karl Schirdewan, both of whom had lost important positions (Janka had even been imprisoned for over three years) for allegedly advocating a less Stalinist political order in the 1950s. After decades as

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"nonpersons," Janka and Schirdewan were now celebrated as failed communist reformers; somewhat undeservedly, their biographies have come to represent alternative socialist roads that the GDR did not take. The sad fates of these two men also poignantly illustrated the despicable treatment that the SED meted out to its most loyal members; their biographies thus came to symbolize the perplexing faults of twentieth-century communism. After 1989, then, once-honored Old Communists were denigrated, while once-disgraced Old Communists were celebrated. Either way, the biographies of Old Communists were exploited to suggest the awful shortcomings of the SED regime. In turn, the demonization of the GDR through the revision of East German biographies has helped legitimate the unification of Germany on West German terms.

While official East German ideology celebrated the antifascist biographies of Old Communists, these biographies came to be exploited in ways that worked against veteran communists and their regime. In the 1950s, party officials invented alleged infractions in the biographies of Old Communists to purge many of these longtime communists. In later decades, in another form of party discipline, the SED determined the public presentation of Old Communists' lives; party authorities strictly controlled memoir writing and publication among the Old Communist cohort. At the same time, veneration of Old Communists' antifascist deeds left a generation of important East German functionaries unwilling to challenge their seniors, a situation that resulted in a debilitating stagnation of the SED regime. Younger East Germans, on the other hand, found Old Communists and all that their biographies stood for hopelessly anachronistic; this helped delegitimize the SED regime. After 1989, the biographies of Old Communists have taken on entirely new meaning; they now represent the evils of communist rule. The biographies of Old Communists have thus come almost full circle: criminalized in Nazi Germany, sanctified in the GDR, Old Communist biographies are now vilified in united Germany.

The case of Old Communists shows the varied and often peculiar workings of biography in East Germany. But it also illustrates more general features of the politics of biography. As

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Guedalla suggested, biography is unfair to those whose lives are its subject. As the East German case demonstrates, this is especially true when biography is put to political ends. When individuals such as the Old Communists forged their biographies, they did not know the future course of history. They did not know whether their biographies would come to symbolize political honor or infamy. Old Communists were also rarely in a position to influence the meaning attached to their biographies. And they did not know whether, once given, the significance of their biographies would be transient or permanent. Individuals have precious little power over the fate of their biographies.

Political regimes, by contrast, are often the arbiters of biography. This is especially true in communist polities, in which party or state institutions have near-total control over political discourse. But all regimes officially privilege or celebrate certain biographies while vilifying or even criminalizing others. In turn, the biographies that a regime chooses to honor, ignore, or stigmatize speak volumes about the regime itself; indeed, these choices are the measure of a regime. The meanings attributed to past experience, however, are not only determined by party or state authorities. As the case of the East German Old Communists suggests, they are also subject to changing historical sensibilities. Generational change, along with social and political developments, ensure the constant renegotiation of biographical meaning. The politics of biography thus has its own dynamics—all too often unexpected, unintended, and unstoppable. To further build on Guedalla's metaphor that opened this essay, the politics of biography is a dangerous sport; this hunting ground proves a shifting terrain for individuals, an unmapped topography for regimes.

As this account shows, the politics of biography works both to uphold and to undermine political regimes. The biographies of Old Communists were exploited to lend legitimacy to the SED's antifascist claims. They were also used to popularize the party's political values. In addition, the SED engaged in a peculiar politics of biography to consolidate its regime: the disciplining of Old Communists through the negative revision of their past biographies. This seems, however, to have been

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standard Stalinist practice. At the same time, the politics of biography may weaken a political order. In East Germany, it prevented a much-needed leadership change. Furthermore, once the antifascist biographies of Old Communists no longer spoke to large segments of the population, they came to symbolize the shortcomings, rather than the virtues, of the SED regime. The politics of biography thus helped to delegitimize the East German order.

Finally, the case of Old Communists suggests that the politics of biography is particularly pronounced in times of revolutionary transformation—whether from parliamentarism to totalitarianism, fascism to communism, or dictatorship to democracy. In such transformations, new regimes are eager to radically distance themselves from their predecessors. They thus ostentatiously celebrate those whose lives contributed to the new order, while purging (symbolically or otherwise) those who sustained the ancien régime. But that is not all. All revolutionary regimes face the difficult dilemma of creating a new society with a population shaped by an old political order. In the aftermath of the June 1953 uprising against the SED regime, Bertolt Brecht rather cynically suggested that the SED should simply rid itself of its population: "Would it not be easier . . . for the government / To dissolve the people / And elect another?"[37] Short of Brecht's radical (but not unheard of) solution, new regimes invent an ideal, although imagined, population: the biographies of those whose lives symbolize the new revolutionary order are taken to be indicative of the population as a whole. Thus in the GDR, virtually all East Germans were, officially, antifascists. At the discursive level, then, the regime's ideological aims resonate with those of its population. The exploitation of biography for transformative political projects has proven a significant feature of twentieth-century political upheaval. One may only hope that as this century draws to a close, so too will the practice of the politics of biography.

ENDNOTES

[1]Philip Guedalla, *Supers and Supermen: Studies in Politics, History and Letters* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1920), 233.

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[2]Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 24.

[3]Adam Gopnik, "Papon's Paper Trial," *The New Yorker,* 27 April and 4 May 1998, 88.

[4]V. I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?" in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), 72.

[5]V. I. Lenin, *Werke*, vol. 11 (Berlin: Dietz, 1958), 414. Lenin's emphasis.

[6]For a comprehensive account of Old Communists in East Germany, see Catherine Epstein, "The Last Revolutionaries: The Old Communists of East Germany, 1945–1989," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1998.

[7]Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 228–229.

[8]The phrase comes from Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–25.

[9]Manfred Overesch, *Buchenwald und die DDR oder Die Suche nach Selbstlegitimation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 321.

[10]"Richtlinien zur Arbeit der Parteikontrollkommissionen und zur Verhängung von Parteistrafen," *Beilage zu "Neuer Weg"* 17 (33) (1952): 5.

[11]Klaus-Georg Riegel, "Kaderbiographien in marxistisch-leninistischen Virtuosengemeinschaften," *Leviathan* 22 (1) (1994): 27–29.

[12]Wolfgang Kießling, *Der Fall Baender* (Berlin: Dietz, 1991), 174, 180.

[13]"Lehren aus dem Prozeß gegen das Verschwörerzentrum Slansky," in *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Dietz, 1952), 211–212; "Über die Auswertung des Beschlusses des Zentralkomitees zu den 'Lehren aus dem Prozeß gegen das Verschwörerzentrum Slansky,'" in *Dokumente*, 4:405–407; and speech by Hermann Matern to the 13th Central Committee Meeting, 13–14 May 1953, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, Zentrales Parteiarchiv, IV 2/1/115, 236, 246 (hereafter cited as SAPMO-BA, ZPA).

[14]Lutz Niethammer, ed., *Der "gesäuberte" Antifaschismus* (Berlin: Akademie, 1994), 85.

[15]For a full discussion of the politics of Old Communist memoirs, see Catherine Epstein, "The Production of 'Official Memory' in East Germany: Old Communists and the Dilemmas of Memoir Writing," *Central European History* (forthcoming).

[16]Cläre Quast to an unknown Emmi, 17 June 1970, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, EA0740/2, 162.

[17]H. Schumann to Josef (Sepp) Hahn, 24 December 1958, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, NL98/5, 178.

[18]Ilse Schiel, "Zum Platz und Wesen der Erinnerungen bei der Verbreitung des marxistisch-leninistischen Geschichtsbildes: Erfahrungen und Probleme des Sammelns, Gestaltens, Wertens," Ph.D. dissertation, Institut für Marxismus-

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Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands, 1981, 298–302.

[19]Minutes of Secretariat Meeting, 24 April 1974, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, J IV 2/3/2146, enclosure no. 14, 150.

[20]Franz Dahlem, *Am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Dietz, 1977).

[21]Günter Heyden to Kurt Hager, 11 November 1974, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, ME-Nr.11.528. Heyden's emphasis.

[22]Franz Dahlem to Erich Honecker, 1 July 1975, SAPMO-BA, ZPA, ME-Nr.11.528.

[23]An East German discussion of memoir literature was titled "It has been worthwhile." Marianne Lange, "Es hat sich gelohnt zu leben," *Weimarer Beiträge* 25 (9) (1979).

[24]Christa Wolf, *Reden in Herbst* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1990), 29–30.

[25]Horst Grunert, "Überwintern in einer Nische," in *OhnMacht*, ed. Brigitte Zimmermann and Hans-Dieter Schütt (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1992), 69–70.

[26]Manfred Uschner, *Die zweite Etage* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993), 78.

[27]Anne McElvoy, *The Saddled Cow: East Germany's Life and Legacy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), 76.

[28]Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), 296, 297, n. 1.

[29]Marianne Schmidt, ed., *Einmischung der Enkel in Jürgen Kuczynskis "Dialog mit meinem Urenkel"* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1989), 81–82.

[30]Ibid., 91.

[31]Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro*, vol. 1, *Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 47–50.

[32]Niethammer, *Der "gesäuberte" Antifaschismus.*

[33]Karl Corino, *Aussen Marmor, innen Gips* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1996); and Karl Corino, "Dichtung in eigener Sache," *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), 4 October 1996, 9–11.

[34]Manfred Jäger, "Nachbesserungen," *Deutschland Archiv* 29 (1996): 844–848.

[35]Monika Zorn, ed., *Hitlers zweimal getötete Opfer* (Freiburg: Ahriman-Verlag, 1994), 297. Zorn's emphasis.

[36]Ibid., 297–298.

[37]Bertolt Brecht, "The Solution," in Bertolt Brecht, *Poems 1913–1956*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (Routledge: New York, 1987), 440.

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*Samantha Power*

# To *Suffer* by Comparison?

## INTRODUCTION

In 1993 a group of Americans banded together to form an organization called "Jews Against Genocide" (JAG). Their explicit goal was to galvanize American interest in—and action to stop—the genocide then underway in Bosnia. The grassroots group organized teach-ins, public rallies, clothing drives, and candlelight vigils. They produced educational videos and published informational leaflets. One day they even marched to the Manhattan home of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Initially, according to Marla Stone, an assistant professor of history at Occidental College and a cofounder of the group, their protests barely registered with the general public. When the JAG demonstrators informed passersby of the horrors, people usually walked away. But Stone remembers the transformation that occurred one day when her group changed tactics and decided to tie the events in Bosnia to the genocide that had occurred in the same part of the world fifty years before. JAG volunteers began shouting, "You've seen *Schindler's List*; now look at Bosnia." Suddenly, pedestrians responded, taking leaflets and stopping to inquire about events. "We felt vulgar using the analogy," Stone recalls, "but it worked."[1]

Six years later, on the evening that NATO began bombing Yugoslavia in an effort to stop Serb abuses in Kosovo, President Bill Clinton delivered an address from the Oval Office in which

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he invoked the memory of Hitler to garner support for his decision to "stand up to brutality and the killing of innocent people." He likened events on the ground in Kosovo to those that had taken place in Europe during World War II and asked, "What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler earlier? Just imagine if leaders back then had acted wisely and early enough, how many lives could have been saved, how many Americans would not have had to die?"[2]

This essay explores a familiar but peculiarly American phenomenon in which journalists, advocates, and, when they are justifying intervention, U.S. policymakers draw comparisons between contemporary cases of genocide and the Holocaust. At its core the essay questions the extent to which such analogizing, or "Holocaustizing," indeed "works." Under certain circumstances, as the JAG anecdote illustrates, use of the Holocaust analogy can succeed in grabbing the attention of bystanders, which is one goal of those who invoke it. Holocaustizing may also be one factor behind the robust Western humanitarian response to recent genocides, and it may have helped spark interest in prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes against humanity after the fact. But it has not succeeded in achieving what its users set out to achieve: it has not moved U.S. decision makers to intervene forcefully to stop the atrocities underway.[3] Though the use of the analogy can hardly be blamed for this failure, I will argue that advocates might wish to rethink their reliance upon the Holocaust. Due to the overuse and misuse of the Holocaust analogy in other settings, the reference may carry less shock value than its users assume. It may precipitate a bitter, abstract, and distracting battle over the aptness of the analogy. It may cause a backlash by those who believe in the uniqueness of the Holocaust. It may, by virtue of its very extremity, set an unreasonably "high" standard of horror. And ultimately, despite the best of intentions, we may end up concentrating on an abstract connection with crimes of the past at the expense of arguments that focus on the victims of the present.

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## "HOLOCAUSTIZING" GENOCIDE

It is much easier to document the extraordinary frequency with which the analogy is invoked than it is to assess the impact of the Holocaust analogy on American decision makers. In the last two decades, journalists and humanitarian lobbyists have repeatedly deployed the analogy to signal the gravity of the scale and intent of contemporary mass killing.

One of the first such efforts was made in the late 1970s, when the Khmer Rouge oversaw the killing of more than one million Cambodians. It was not until 1977—a full two years after Pol Pot had evacuated Cambodia's cities, sealed its borders, and begun murdering those with anything higher than an elementary education—that prominent Americans began to cry out for some form of action. Upon doing so, they turned to the Holocaust for help.[4] Syndicated columnists Jack Anderson and Les Whitten wrote in the *Washington Post* on July 21, 1977, "Adolf Hitler *at his worst* was not as oppressive as the Communist rulers of tiny Cambodia." The *Economist* described "brutality that would make Hitler cringe." In an April 1978 *New York Times* editorial entitled "Silence is Guilt," William Safire referred to the *Holocaust* television miniseries that had just aired and asked why the world was doing nothing to stop the "bloodbath in Cambodia." "In terms of numbers of people killed," Safire wrote, "this generation's rival to Adolf Hitler is the leader of Communist Cambodia, Pol Pot." In May 1978, a *New York Times* front-page story described the Cambodian refugees who arrived in Thailand and said they "recall concentration camp survivors in the Europe of 1945."

It was not just reporters and editorial writers who groped for a device that they hoped would help them represent the suffering. U.S. congressmen, challenging the executive policy, also repeatedly played up the parallel. Senator Bob Dole compared Cambodia to "the death camps of Nazi Germany." Senator George McGovern, the lone lawmaker to urge military intervention to stop the killing, drew the same link. And Representative Bob Dornan asked, "Who could fail to take pity on these millions of unfortunates now reliving the unforgettable horrors of Auschwitz, Chelmo, Belsen and Treblinka?"[5]

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However, neither the Ford nor the Carter administrations responded with alacrity or humanitarian purpose. In fact, it was not until Vietnam invaded Cambodia in early 1979, ousting the Khmer Rouge, that Americans leaders became exercised about the Cambodian tragedy—and then they protested not Pol Pot's atrocities but the Vietnamese invasion, calling for the restoration of the exiled Khmer Rouge regime.

In Bosnia in 1992, a coincidence of geography and a chilling set of television images made the Holocaust analogy all the more tempting to those who hoped to describe events or galvanize decision makers. Gaunt Muslim prisoners filmed behind barbed wire at the Trnopolje camp in northern Bosnia became instant emblems of the Bosnian genocide. Television producers sometimes aired footage of these skeletal men alongside that of emaciated Jewish prisoners in Nazi camps.

Several Bosnia correspondents admit the deliberateness with which they evoked the memory of the Nazi killings. In August 1992, for instance, television reporters from ITN emerged from guided tours of the Serb-run camps with ten videotapes of footage. An ITN news producer who met the camera team in Hungary later recalled his motivation in choosing which footage to air: "After viewing their ten tapes, I advised that the image that would shake the world was of skeletal men behind barbed wire. They sparked thoughts of Auschwitz and Belsen."[6]

When Serb beatings, rapes, and killings inside these camps became public, the analogy proliferated in newspapers around the country. Roy Gutman, the *Newsday* reporter who won a Pulitzer for his dispatches on the atrocities, used language that could only stir reminiscences of events of fifty years before. He quoted a Muslim student, Enver Sisic, who said, "Banja Luka is like a big ghetto. We all felt like Jews in the Third Reich." Gutman then relayed accounts of "a freight train with human cargo" in which women, children, and old people were "packed like cattle into sealed boxcars and deported."[7]

As they had done in response to Cambodia, prominent politicians joined in the enterprise. Margaret Thatcher told a television interviewer, "I never thought I'd see another holocaust in my life again."[8] Presidential candidate Bill Clinton, in a speech that would later haunt him, issued a sharp rebuke to

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President George Bush: "If the horrors of the Holocaust taught us anything, it is the high cost of remaining silent and paralyzed in the face of genocide."[9]

Jewish survivors and organizations were particularly forceful in their criticism of U.S. idleness. Elie Wiesel spoke in April 1993 at the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington and interrupted his speech to turn toward then President Clinton to say, "And Mr. President, I cannot *not* tell you something. I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep since what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that. We must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country."[10]

The associations with World War II did not center exclusively on the behavior of the perpetrators. An interminable and fruitless European Union–led negotiation process also caused many to draw comparisons between bystanders—likening the European "appeasers" of the 1990s to those who had kowtowed before Hitler in Munich in 1938, allowing him to carve up Czechoslovakia. Confronting members of the Bush administration for their passivity, Representative Tom Lantos assailed Assistant Secretary of State Tom Niles. "Munich and appeasement keeps reverberating in my mind," Lantos said.[11] Although NATO did intervene militarily in Bosnia, it did so in August 1995, three and a half years after the war began and long after militant nationalists had cleansed the country beyond recognition, leaving three ethnically "pure" statelets in their wake.

In Rwanda, Hutu militants set out to exterminate the entire Tutsi minority. The sheer numbers of victims, the pace of killings, and the perpetrators' holistic intent make the genocide in Rwanda the clearest parallel to the Holocaust of the last half-century. While the killing occurred, however, American correspondents struggled to distinguish the massacres from what editors and readers dismissed as "run-of-the-mill" African tribal violence. They groped for images that would make readers suspend their biases against the continent and understand that something profoundly evil was afoot.

CNN anchor John Holliman described the television images of Rwandan bodies clogging the Kagera River as "creating a picture not seen since the Nazi death camps of the 1940s."[12]

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The *Washington Post*'s Jennifer Parmelee described how "the heads and limbs of victims were sorted and piled neatly, a bone-chilling order in the midst of chaos that harked back to the Holocaust. . . ." She quoted a colleague who described bodies "stacked like cordwood." Herman Cohen, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, criticized the Clinton administration's "wimpish approach" and advised, "Another Holocaust may just have slipped by, hardly noticed." Witnesses likened the Hutu killing campaign to "Rwanda's Ethnic 'Final Solution.'"[13]

And advocates, too, made the link. Roger Winter, the Director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, contributed a Rwandan "Diary" to the *Washington Post* on June 5, 1994. He began baldly:

> Go deep inside Rwanda today and you will not find gas chambers or massive crematoria. But you will find genocide. And if you linger amid the bodies and stench at Rwanda's human slaughter sites long enough, you will gain—as I did—a horrified sense that in some ways this frenzied attempt to annihilate an entire population contains scenes eerily reminiscent of the "Final Solution" attempted 50 years ago.

He then recounted a moment on his trip when he sifted through the strewn personal effects of victims. "It seemed as if the inanimate items were desperately trying to cry out," he wrote, "much like the piles of shoes and spectacles left behind by Jewish genocide victims that are now on display at the Holocaust Museum in Washington."[14]

Notwithstanding the vividness of the images and indeed the magnitude of the horror, the United Nations Security Council withdrew UN peacekeepers from Rwanda, and the genocide proceeded unabated until Rwandan Tutsi rebels fought their way to the country's capital, forcing the perpetrators to flee.

This survey of attempts to Holocaustize the Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda genocides offers anecdotal insight into the tendency of journalists and advocates to rely upon the metaphor. I have not documented the precise extent to which proponents of humanitarian intervention have turned to the analogy. But on the basis of these and thousands of other Holocaust refer-

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ences, it is safe to say that the Holocaust analogy featured extremely frequently and prominently in reporters' descriptions of the crimes and in public appeals for action.

This raises two questions. First, why was the Holocaust—an event that occurred more than thirty years before the Cambodia genocide, and nearly fifty years before the Bosnia and the Rwanda genocides—so central in the minds of Americans and consequently in the political action strategies of those urging the U.S. government to suppress the horrors then underway? And second, did the Holocaust's centrality help, hamper, or have no impact at all upon these well-meaning efforts to secure succor?

## AMERICA'S "SHOAH" BUSINESS

The reporters and advocates who invoke Holocaust imagery operate in an era in which the horrors of World War II are omnipresent in American culture. This was not the case in the decades immediately following World War II. The use of the analogy that is now so ubiquitous would have then seemed not only ineffective but bizarre. Americans did not yet view the extermination of Jews as an entity or event distinct from the killing that accompanied the brutal war. While World War II was being fought, most Americans both in and outside of government claimed not to comprehend the scale of Hitler's crime. Although revelations about German atrocities appeared in the mainstream American press, and although high-level officials had access to intelligence reports that described executions and gassings, newspaper editors tended to bury most of these stories behind tales of Allied battlefield or home-front heroics. Even when editors gave stories banner headlines, readers often shrugged off the numbers cited, assuming that, as in World War I, the reports of mass killings had been exaggerated. Thus, though the public record had estimated that two million European Jews had been killed or deported since the war began, fewer than half trusted the reports; most either thought the atrocity tales were "just a rumor" or expressed no opinion about them. By December 1944, Americans had come to believe

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that murders were indeed taking place, but most estimated the number of deaths at one hundred thousand or fewer.[15]

Though American intelligence officials gradually learned of Hitler's plot to exterminate the Jews, the Roosevelt administration downplayed the reports, portraying Hitler, not inaccurately, as an enemy of "free people everywhere." In much the same way and for much the same reason that President Lincoln did not initially portray the Civil War as one fought to combat slavery, Roosevelt chose not to risk public support by packaging the war as a battle fought in order to rescue Jews. Both Lincoln and Roosevelt feared that American popular prejudice—against blacks and, here, Jews—would spark a backlash that would debilitate rather than deepen the war effort. Roosevelt had already been attacked by anti-Semites who charged that his administration contained so many Jews that his domestic reform agenda might be better dubbed the "Jew Deal." He calculated that the propaganda value of portraying Hitler as an exterminator of Jews would not outweigh the damage done by associating the risk of American lives with the rescue of those Jews.

Film and media coverage of World War II reveals a typical absence of popular awareness or perception of Hitler's systematic extermination campaign. During and immediately after World War II, film studio executives, like most Americans, did not warm to or even really contemplate the subject. Of the more than five hundred narrative films made on war-related themes between 1940 and 1945, for instance, virtually none focused upon the persecution or extermination of Jews.[16] Early postwar efforts to portray the Holocaust on television revealed a desire to inform viewers without alienating them. In one example, a May 1953 episode of *This Is Your Life* introduced many American television viewers to a Holocaust survivor for the first time. Host Ralph Edwards profiled Hanna Bloch Kohner, an attractive woman in her thirties who had survived Auschwitz. "Looking at you it's hard to believe that during seven short years of a still short life, you lived a lifetime of fear, terror and tragedy," Edwards declared, telling her she looked "like a young American girl just out of college, not at all like a survivor of Hitler's cruel purge of German Jews." Never mentioning

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that six million Jews had been murdered, Edwards adopted a tone of renewal that perhaps befit the optimistic age: "This is your life, Hanna Block Kohner. To you in your darkest hour, America held out a friendly hand. Your gratitude is reflected in your unwavering devotion and loyalty to the land of your adoption."[17] The *Diary of Anne Frank*, which began performances in 1955, garnered huge crowds, rave reviews, a Pulitzer Prize, and a Tony Award for best play, but, as both critics and fans of the play have noted, young Anne's Jewish identity remained in the background, and she embodied the American mood by refusing to lose her faith in humanity. When the film *Judgment at Nuremberg* was produced in 1961, it included graphic footage of the camps and the corpses they contained, but few references to Jews as victims. In addition, when a major network sponsor, the American Gas Association, objected to the mention of gas chambers, CBS caved in to pressure and blanked out the references.[18]

The slowness with which Americans embraced the Holocaust is probably attributable to a number of factors. The United States hoped to invest in and rearm Germany, an important new ally against the Soviet Union. Thus, few American policymakers sought to shine a spotlight upon the horrors of the Holocaust. But in addition, a critical mass of individuals did not congeal to press for reflection. It may seem surprising that American Jews—now indispensable to promoting Holocaust commemoration—were publicly reticent about Hitler's crimes in this period. Survivors who trickled into the United States occasionally staged their own private memorial events or moments, but these were not centrally coordinated or conceived. Lacking the organization and the status in American society that they would later attain, many Jews were then eager to assimilate, leery of anti-Semitism, determined not to be depicted as victims, and, like most Americans, initially unappreciative of the enormity of the killings.

In the late 1970s, however, the Holocaust finally did become the subject of intensive study and discussion in the United States. "Holocaust" derives from the Greek *holokauston*; it is a translation of the Hebrew *churban*, which means a burnt offering to God and appears in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 7:9).

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Scholars disagree as to how and when the word Holocaust first crept into the American lexicon. The first reference to a holocaust in the context of the European Jewry may have appeared in an editor's footnote to a 1938 edition of Freud's collected works. The editor wrote, "Alas! As these pages are going to the printer we have been startled by the terrible news that the Nazi holocaust has circled Vienna."[19] The Second World Congress of Jewish Studies used the term in 1957 to describe the singular event of the extermination of the Jews.[20] Many scholars credit Elie Wiesel, who published *Night* in 1959, with popularizing "Holocaust" as a proper noun. Others date the English language use of the word to the 1961 Eichmann trial, when journalists translated the Hebrew word *shoah*, or catastrophe, into English as "holocaust."[21] Regardless, by the late 1960s people who had spoken of a holocaust and, later, *the* holocaust began to use the capital letter and to refer to "The Holocaust" to indicate the German destruction of Jews. By 1968 the reference had become so widespread that the Library of Congress created a class of work headed "Holocaust: Jewish 1939–1945."[22] The theme "Holocaust" first appeared in the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature in 1973. After a slow start, the Holocaust became the focus of extensive study and commemoration. By the 1990s, as one observer harshly quipped, there had come to be "no business like *Shoah* business" in the United States. The American press, which had run only isolated Holocaust-related newspaper stories, began to fixate on the subject. The Israeli Mossad's abduction of Adolf Eichmann and the graphic trial that followed probably marked the beginning of this process. But a series of catalytic events—such as the Skokie marches, President Reagan's Bitburg visit, the Waldheim affair, the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz dispute, the Demjanjuk deportation, the film *Schindler's List*, Daniel Goldhagen's account of the role of ordinary Germans, the contemporary war-crimes trials against aging Nazis like Maurice Papon, and Switzerland's fall from grace—also nudged the issue into the headlines.[23] And once the 1990s began, bicentennial anniversaries and commemorative veterans' ceremonies cropped up on a nearly daily basis, further expanding the opportunities for reflection. According to a 1997 study by writer James Carroll, the major

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newspapers published more stories on Holocaust themes between 1990 and 1997 than in the preceding forty-five years combined. In fact, the Holocaust received the *same* amount of coverage in the 1995–1997 period as it did fifty years before in the 1945–1947 era.[24] The film and television industry's attention to the Holocaust both intensified along with popular interest and helped *fuel* that interest. Though the first Holocaust film account to capture a broad audience had been *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), it was NBC's, nine-and-a-half hour, four-day, prime-time television miniseries *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss*, starring Meryl Streep and James Woods, that sparked real debate. First aired in 1978, the Emmy award–winning series was watched by an estimated 120 million Americans (and some four hundred million television viewers worldwide). *Schindler's List*, which was released in 1993, drew comparable numbers in the United States. Some 25 million Americans watched the Oscar-winning film in the theater; another 42 million viewed it on video; and a record 65 million tuned in to the television screening in 1997.

Accompanying the boom in film and television coverage of the Holocaust, memorials, museums, and video archives also proliferated. In the decades immediately following Germany's defeat, Jewish leaders and survivors had affixed plaques to the walls of synagogues or parks (the first one appeared in Riverside Park in New York in 1947). But beginning in 1981, when Michigan's West Bloomfield Township opened the first-ever museum devoted solely to the Holocaust, the commemoration effort began to expand. The United States now boasts seven major museums—in West Bloomfield, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, St. Petersburg, and, most notably, Washington, D.C. The United States Holocaust Museum, which was commissioned by Jimmy Carter in 1978, opened on the Mall in 1993. Perched among the nation's most treasured sites, the Holocaust Museum has a budget of $51 million and receives an average of two million visitors a year—nearly double the number of visitors tallied annually by the White House.[25]

The companion educational efforts have been immense. Since 1990, chairs in Holocaust Studies have been established at Emory University, the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey,

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Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Clark University. In 1994 financier Ken Lipper attempted to induce Harvard University to join this club of schools. Lipper donated $3.2 million for the purposes of establishing a Holocaust Studies chair but succeeded in educating us only on the politics of life in academia, as controversy over the selection of the professor who would hold the chair ended in the abandonment of the search. The Fortunoff Video Archives at Yale, which were created in 1979, and Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation have created a place for visitors to come to hear first-person survivor accounts.[26] Seventeen states either mandate or recommend Holocaust programs in their schools. And the State Department hosted a discussion in early December 1998 at the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets, at which they weighed the possibility of distributing the handbook "Tell Ye Your Children" to 52.2 million American schoolchildren.[27] In 1998 the Association of Holocaust Organizations listed 113 Holocaust institutions throughout the United States.

The sources of this explosion in American and Jewish Holocaust awareness are multiple and exceed the scope of this essay. Still, it is worth reflecting briefly on some of the reasons that attention to the Holocaust might have increased so dramatically in the United States. If one reason for avoidance of the subject of German crimes during the first years of the Cold War had been the country's strategic utility to the United States, it made some sense that once Germany had become durably embraced by the United States and skeptically endured by many of its neighbors in Europe, Americans could "safely" begin to reflect upon Nazi misdeeds. By the 1970s, the United States no longer felt the need to close ranks entirely behind its German ally. Additionally, many American groups that had long shunned victim status began to claim its privileges and entitlements. In a fierce burst of identity politics, Hispanics, African Americans, gays, feminists, and others began to speak and vote as blocs for the first time. Under these changed circumstances, American Jewish organizations and individuals could revisit the Holocaust and reflect in a more congenial climate upon the implications of Jewish victimization.

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Though Americans of all denominations have been receptive to Holocaust education and commemoration, historian Peter Novick argues in the provocative new book *The Holocaust in American Life* that Jewish leaders played the key role in sparking and then nurturing Holocaust awareness. Novick claims that it was the circumstances and needs of American Jews that caused leaders of Jewish organizations to step forward into this transitional environment to claim the Holocaust as their own and to lobby for its publicization.[28] On his account, Jews could do so because a negative set of constraints had vanished. Though they had initially striven to make themselves "more American than apple pie," American Jewry had subsequently achieved such security and indeed prominence in American life that they no longer felt obliged to keep their heads down. They could speak out *as Jews* without fearing an instant and unabashed anti-Semitic backlash. Yet Novick also contends that the Jews' successful integration paradoxically endangered their cohesion as a community. Thus, he notes that as American Jewish leaders began eyeing the ever-rising rates of Jewish intermarriage and the ever-diminishing presence of Jews in synagogue in the late 1970s, they recognized that assimilation might be working *too* well.[29] According to Novick, Jewish leaders sensed the ineffectiveness and indeed divisiveness of the ideas that might once have bound Jews together—Judaism as a religion, Jewishness as a culture, or Israel as a homeland—and decided to turn to something less controversial: the Holocaust. The Holocaust came to constitute the single event or institution with which all Jews—however secular, however estranged—could share an identification. A second factor motivating American Jews' emphasis on the Holocaust was the desire of many Zionists to remind the international public at large and Jews specifically of the perennial vulnerability of the Jewish people, thereby justifying military and financial aid to Israel. According to Novick, Zionists made the case that outside support was necessary to prevent Arab forces, often likened to Nazis, from achieving their goal of "wiping Israel off the map." In 1978, for instance, when the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) campaigned to stop the sale of U.S. aircraft to Saudi Arabia, it sent each congressperson a copy of the novel based on the

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*Holocaust* television series. The emergence of neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers in Western Europe and the United States compounded the Jews' sense of—and claims to—fear.[30] The Holocaust has been deployed as a defensive shield as well as an offensive weapon. Reports of Israeli abuses against Arabs have often been met with references to the Holocaust as if that catastrophe constituted proof that Jews could never be *too careful.*

In reflecting upon some of the instrumental reasons for invocation and exploration of the Holocaust, we should not lose sight of the fact that the Holocaust was a singular, diabolical, and devastating tragedy. It is so extreme an enormity that indeed it *warrants* this heightened (if belated) emphasis. Historical, political, psychological, and emotional reflection upon the Holocaust both honors the dead and usually strives rightly to help shape the behavior of the living.

## WHY "HOLOCAUSTIZE"?

With interest in the Holocaust and its "lessons" increasing every day, three principal deployers of the Holocaust analogy have emerged: reporters, advocates (including editorial writers, human-rights or humanitarian lobbyists, members of Congress who hope to galvanize executive action, and others), and American policymakers. These groups tap this burst of awareness in the United States and "Holocaustize" with two main hopes in mind: to communicate the horrors in a comprehensible fashion to Americans and to generate—or, in the case of policymakers, generate support for—action.

American policymakers are the most transparent in their aims. They often begin Holocaustizing as soon as they have decided to act militarily against a foreign foe. They assume that the analogy will add a moral veneer to their policy. In the buildup to the Gulf War, for example, George Bush transformed Saddam Hussein into American "Enemy Number One" less by portraying him as the man who seized Kuwaiti oil fields as by depicting him as "another Hitler" who killed Kuwaiti babies. Bush latched onto the Hitler analogy, first employing it on August 8, 1991, when he announced the dispatch of Ameri-

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can troops to the Gulf. Upon deciding to bomb Yugoslavia in March 1999, President Clinton and his cabinet similarly likened the Serb outrages to those perpetrated by Hitler's henchmen.

Not all analogy "users" invoke the parallel self-consciously. For many, the Holocaust springs spontaneously to mind. Individuals who witness the events are in many cases simply struck—and distraught—by an eerie resonance. One Dutch peacekeeper, who was stationed in the UN safe area of Srebrenica when Serb forces seized the Bosnian enclave and began separating the men from the women and the children, said that what occurred to him at that moment were two movies, *Sophie's Choice* and *Schindler's List*.[31] Holocaust survivors with no particular policy agenda often describe the pain of reliving their own experiences when they are confronted by contemporary horrors. Meyer Hack, a survivor who spent six years in a Nazi camp and lost thirty-six relatives in the Holocaust, spoke to one reporter about his experience watching Albanian refugees flee Kosovo: "The things I saw and what I went through is indescribable," he said. "Now 50 years later, it all comes back."[32]

Many reporters and advocates use the analogy because they too believe the grisly images of the day are comparable to those of the Hitler era. But others consciously or unconsciously refer to the Holocaust because they hope it will help them represent the unrepresentable or because they have concluded outside action should be taken and they adopt the tactic that they feel will most likely engender societywide support for intervention. The advocates who invoke Nazi horrors are often themselves moved by the memory of the Holocaust, and they assume it will move others. Whether the Holocaust serves as an ingrained filter, a descriptive device, or an advocacy tool, those who liken ongoing genocide to the Nazi terror certainly appear to believe it will convey the atrocities on the ground and persuade the disinterested, the passive, or the confused that the United States should respond robustly to the brutality underway.

For the purposes of both representation and advocacy, the use of analogy is quite common. Even in instances where events do not defy ordinary experience as genocide does, policymakers, journalists, and advocates are prone to rely upon them. According to cognitive psychologists, analogizing is popular because it

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helps us overcome our mental limitations by supplying an intelligible heuristic. Statesmen in the United States compared the Cuban missile crisis to Pearl Harbor. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, who had been a cabinet minister under Neville Chamberlain, likened Abdal Nasser's seizure of the Suez to Hitler's occupation of the Sudetenland. And we have all been told to see Somalia in Rwanda, or the Sarajevo of 1914 in the Sarajevo of 1992. On the Hill, members of Congress trade analogies as well as insults across the aisle. Each time an overseas deployment is contemplated, they must decide whether they are embarking upon a Vietnam-style quagmire or a Munich-style retreat.[33]

Communicating the horrors of a contemporary but utterly foreign concept or country can be very difficult. Because the American public usually has next to no interest in, experience with, or knowledge about the countries in question—Bosnia, Rwanda, and Cambodia are not heavily touristed sites—advocates and journalists seek to educate in a hurry. They Holocaustize as a short cut, latching on to an analogy that they feel can bridge the chasm between the horror on the ground and the distant Americans who are unfamiliar with the circumstances giving rise to the crisis.

The extremity of genocide makes analogizing seem all the more necessary. Mark Fritz, the Associated Press correspondent who won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of the Rwandan genocide, recalled the impossibility of covering mass slaughter: "I doubt if there is any other place in the world where so many people who write for a living have used the phrase, 'Words cannot describe. . . .'"[34] Almost exactly fifty years before, one fourteen-year-old Jewish boy had reflected upon the inadequacy of mere words in capturing either the events or the imagination. "If heaven were paper," he wrote to his parents during the Holocaust, "and all the seas in the world were ink, I couldn't describe to you my suffering or what I see about me."[35]

The representation of atrocity has long tested the moral and practical imagination. Witnesses and victims have struggled admirably but unsuccessfully from time immemorial to transmit horror to those who have not witnessed or experienced it and who are happy to erect what Primo Levi once likened to a

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*cordon sanitaire* to keep such dreadful details out of their lives. Claude Lanzmann, who directed the important *Shoah* documentary, lived in France during World War II and fought as a seventeen-year-old member of the Jewish resistance to the Nazis. Yet when asked when he first really knew of the atrocities committed against Jews during the war, he confessed that his "knowledge" had long been passive. "The most honest answer that I can give is that I started to know really when I started to work on the film," he explained. "Before, my knowledge had no strength, no force. It was an abstract knowledge, an empty one."[36] President Clinton claimed similar ignorance when he visited the Rwandan capital four years after the genocide. Despite extensive (if imperfect) press coverage at the time of the killings, Clinton recalled, "All over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day after day, who *did not fully appreciate* the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror."[37] Lanzmann and Clinton have little in common, but they share the claim to have been unable to translate knowledge of atrocity into understanding.

Those who have not experienced such violence naturally find it difficult to process. Confronted with reports of Rwandan massacres that he estimated would have taken between one-third and one-half of the population of Indianapolis, Representative Dan Burton confessed: "All I can say is I just can't fathom what is going on over there. The carnage is so great, it just mystifies me, I guess."[38] When Jan Karski, a member of the Polish resistance, escaped Poland in 1942, he traveled to the United States in an effort to relay the Jewish and Polish experience under Nazi occupation to senior American officials. When Karski met with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, Frankfurter responded, "I do not believe you." When Karski protested, Frankfurter explained, "I do not mean that you are lying. I simply said I cannot believe you."[39]

During the Holocaust Jean Amery, who survived but would later commit suicide, was suspended by his wrists from behind until his shoulders had been wrenched from their sockets. Afterwards, he described the futility of attempting to articulate the suffering he endured.

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> Was it "like a red-hot iron in my shoulders" and was this "like a blunt wooden stake driven into the base of my head?"—a simile would only stand for something else, and in the end we would be led around by the nose in a hopeless carousel of comparisons. Pain was what it was. There's nothing further to say about it. Qualities of feeling are as incomparable as they are indescribable. They mark the limits of language's ability to communicate.[40]

Yet those interested in galvanizing a response to atrocity cannot simply accept the limits of language. And they have not given up—they still employ words in the service of the cause. The "Screamers," as Arthur Koestler described them in 1944, are those frustrated few who urge action in newspapers, public meetings, and theaters. They often reach listeners for a moment, only to watch them shake themselves "like puppies who have got their fur wet" and return to the blissful place of ignorance and uninvolvement. "You can convince them for an hour, then they shake themselves, their mental half-defense begins to work and in a week the shrug of incredulity has returned like a reflex temporarily weakened by shock."[41] The "Screamers" invoke the Holocaust analogy because it helps associate a current crisis with a past tragedy, a current war with a past travesty, a current decision to abstain with a past decision to appease.

It is not simply the presence of the Holocaust in the news that the advocates seek to play upon. It is the statements of regret by American executives who have repeatedly and often movingly commemorated the horrors of 1939–1945. These officials have increasingly put themselves on the record saying that the U.S. government should have done more. At the opening of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., in 1993, for instance, President Bill Clinton recalled U.S. inaction: "Before the war even started, doors to liberty were shut, and even after the United States and the Allies attacked Germany, rail lines to the camps within miles of militarily-significant targets were left undisturbed."[42] "Never again" has become a ubiquitous refrain in American political and cultural life. And with American leaders committed to the idea that more should have been done to stop a prior genocide, it is neither unnatural nor unwise for advocates to believe that if they can show a resemblance be-

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tween the Holocaust and a current killing campaign, these same leaders will recognize the need to act. Surely, these advocates probably reason, those who tour the U.S. Holocaust Museum's exhibit on the American failure to bomb Auschwitz will band together behind the bombing of Serb guns around Sarajevo. Surely those who applaud the crowning of Righteous Gentiles will choose to behave righteously and themselves carry out or support rescue operations on behalf of Kosovar Albanians. Surely those who walk the Freedom Trail in Boston and come across the New England Holocaust Memorial will rank the prevention of genocide as a vital U.S. interest. After all, the philanthropists, filmmakers, teachers, Jewish leaders, and U.S. policymakers who fueled the explosion in Holocaust scholarship and commemoration intended to help us learn from history so that tragedies "like the Holocaust" would not be repeated.[43]

## DOES HOLOCAUSTIZING "WORK"?

In the face of genocide, supporters of humanitarian intervention have seized upon the Holocaust metaphor as if it might constitute a moral life preserver in a sea of interest-based callousness. At the tail end of a decade that offered the United States at least two genocides to confront, it is worth weighing the benefits and possible costs of Holocaustizing. If assessing the success of efforts to represent modern atrocity is difficult, assessing the impact of Holocaustizing as an advocacy tactic is an elusive endeavor indeed. It is next to impossible to trace the causal chain between a policy decision and the factor—or vast combination of factors—behind it. But the imperfection of this inquiry should not thwart the effort. We must ask hard questions of the devices employed in excrutiatingly difficult situations.

To a certain but indeterminate extent the "success" of the Holocaust comparison in meeting the advocates' objectives has depended on the perceived aptness of the parallel. This is influenced by many factors—geography, pace or systematization of killing, aesthetics (e.g., skin color), murder device, and so on. Once one can establish a significant resemblance, the analogy appears to succeed, as it did in the Jews Against Genocide

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example, in grabbing the attention of some people. When journalist Roy Gutman came upon killing camps in northern Bosnia in August 1992, his first story drew little attention. But when his editors chose to give his second story a banner, tabloid headline, "THE DEATH CAMPS OF BOSNIA," it drew gasps—and was picked up by all the major news outlets—around the world.[44] The historic resonance of Bosnian Muslim inmates wasting away behind barbed wire in Europe appears to have shaken American and other global leaders, and to have generated a flurry of condemnation and vocal pressure that convinced Bosnian Serbs to close down the camps. The statistical extremity of Rwanda, which became apparent to most Americans only after the genocide had ended, earned that case widespread revulsion. Many readers of Philip Gourevitch's gripping book *We Wish To Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* recall the jarring moment where Gourevitch enabled us to place Rwanda in context with the Holocaust. He wrote that Hutu militants had made lists *just like the Nazis*. And he did the math: Hutu *genocidaire* had killed eight hundred thousand people in a hundred days, or 333 an hour, five and a half lives every minute, at a pace "*nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead* during the Holocaust."[45]

When the Holocaust is mentioned, people do appear to take notice, reacting with a range of feelings—pity, sympathy, sadness, revulsion, outrage, and, occasionally, genuine empathy. The Holocaust analogy may help stir the conscience. Clearly the prevalence of its use indicates that advocates believe it works. In assessing the effectiveness of Holocaustizing, however, we must acknowledge that advocates rarely set out merely to grab attention, to raise consciousness, or to stir consciences. They usually invoke the analogy as a prelude to a political or military prescription, and, if we keep their ends in mind, the analogy has not "worked" as well as they might have liked, or as well as this country's focus upon the Holocaust might lead us to expect.

"Success," of course, need not be defined so starkly. Holocaust-based lobbying may have been one factor behind the large American contributions to UN relief and peacekeeping missions.[46] In Cambodia, the United Nations Transitional Au-

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thority in Cambodia (UNTAC) spent $1.5 billion between November 1991 and September 1993. Though the United States did not deploy its military personnel, it did pay more than a quarter of this mammoth UNTAC budget.[47] In Bosnia, the American share of the cost of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peaceshaping has been steep indeed. With no troops on the ground between 1992 and 1995, the United States still contributed some $2.19 billion of the estimated $4.62 billion UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) total budget.[48] After the Dayton peace deal was signed, the United States contributed nineteen thousand soldiers to the sprawling sixty thousand-strong NATO peacekeeping force. Some sixty-eight hundred Americans currently participate in the mission, which by the end of fiscal year 1999 will have cost Washington some $10.64 billion. Moreover, the mission will need to be funded and staffed well into the next century if peace is to be preserved and the investment justified. In Rwanda, the United States, after standing idle and even blocking UN deployment when the 1994 genocide was perpetrated, did respond to the sight of the Hutu exodus and its accompanying disease and starvation. Between July and September 1994, the United States dispatched 2,350 U.S. troops to join the relief effort, donating U.S. cargo planes to airdrop supplies in Operation "Support Hope." This operation cost the United States more than $170 million.[49]

Additionally, Holocaustizing may have played some role in helping enshrine one supposed "lesson" of the Holocaust: perpetrators of genocide must be *punished*. Thanks largely to American leadership, which was spurred on by pressure from human-rights NGOs and members of Congress, the United Nations in 1993 and 1994 established criminal tribunals to punish the perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity in Bosnia and Rwanda. A similar panel may eventually hear charges against former leaders of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. These judicial processes represent the first occasions since passage of the 1948 Genocide Convention that world leaders have in fact acted upon their obligation to work through UN institutions to punish the perpetrators of genocide. The Nuremberg precedents proved essential to the prosecutors and judges charged with trying the recent cases, and the association of events in

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Bosnia and Rwanda with the Holocaust probably had some influence on the officials in the United States and at the United Nations who labored to set up the courts.

However, if we judge the effectiveness of the analogy according to the main objective of those who employ it—getting the United States and its allies to intervene to stop the killings—or according to that part of the Genocide Convention that obliges not merely punishment but *prevention and suppression*, the analogy has not "worked." The U.S. government has in fact never intervened militarily to stop a genocide underway.[50] This point might seem banal. Indeed it would be odd—and perhaps frightening—if the use of a mere metaphor proved both necessary and sufficient to cause the U.S. policy-making elite to act. Yet it is important to see that Holocaustizing may not simply have the effect of "galvanizing" or "not galvanizing" policymakers. In certain circles, it may alienate, and at certain times, it may excuse.

The power of the analogy may be lessened by the fact that the word "holocaust" is so overused and abused in other settings that its mention no longer really "shocks the conscience" of listeners or readers. The term has been appropriated by numerous communities, which, like those hoping to stop genocide, are determined to play and prey upon the moral mileage that the Holocaust has clocked in recent years. African American leaders introduced the concept of the "black Holocaust" in reference to American slavery, which resulted in the deaths of nearly a quarter of the thirteen million blacks who were shipped to the Americas. *New York Times* journalist Samuel Freedman did a Nexis search in December 1997 and found 335 references to "black Holocaust."[51] By February 1999, the number had risen to 408. The "black Holocaust" movement now boasts conferences, books, a web site with photographs of lynchings and cross burnings, and, since 1988, America's Black Holocaust Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Activists are determined to redress the ignorance among Americans about the criminality and brutality of slavery. However, the numbers are frequently exaggerated and often invented. Louis Farrakhan famously challenged Jews in saying, "Don't push your six million down our throats, when we lost 100 million."[52]

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And the phrase is appropriated by other groups who have far less to complain about than the descendants of American slaves. In a tirade condemning the liberal persecution of America's Christian populace, Pat Robertson declared on his Christian Broadcasting Network:

> Just what Nazi Germany did to the Jews, so liberal America is now doing to evangelical Christians. . . . *It's no different; it's the same thing.* It is happening all over again. It is the Democratic Congress, the liberal-biased media, and the homosexuals who want to destroy all Christians. It's more terrible than anything suffered by any minority in our history.[53]

Robertson accompanied his polemic with television images of Nazi atrocities. Opponents of abortion have also invoked the parallel, decrying the "American Holocaust." Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop once noted a progression "from liberalized abortion . . . to active euthanasia . . . to the very beginnings of the political climate that led to Auschwitz, Dachau, and Belsen."[54]

We have witnessed an unseemly trading of Holocaust metaphors during the Kosovo crisis. Just as NATO spokesmen invoked Holocaust imagery to describe Serb atrocities, the Serb leadership likened Clinton to Hitler and NATO bombers to the German Luftwaffe.

While it may seem obvious that the Holocaust and the comparisons between American slavery, creeping liberalism, abortion, or NATO air strikes are manifestly inapt, policymakers who oppose action or who are simply unconvinced by the comparison have also had little difficulty distinguishing the recent cases of actual genocide from a crime of the scale, pace, and place of Hitler's terror. Aware that the cases share certain features, naysayers have focused on the characteristics that are dissimilar, or they have simply invoked another analogy to match or attempt to trump the Holocaust analogy. In essence, Holocaustizing has invariably yielded a contest over the likeness of a current genocide to the Holocaust, and the contest itself has carried costs.

The battle over analogies often deteriorates into a senseless game of tit-for-tat. For every Munich or Auschwitz compari-

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son, opponents of intervention in Bosnia tended to offer a Vietnam analogy, wave the "quagmire" bogey, or liken the conflict to an inevitable, age-old civil war. In early August 1992, for example, soon after the brutality of the Serb camps had been exposed, President Bush said he was horrified by ethnic cleansing. But, lest constituents be swayed by the analogy then circulating, he noted that the war was "a complex, convoluted conflict which grows out of old animosity. The blood of innocents is being spilled over centuries-old feuds. The lines between enemies and even friends are jumbled and fragmented."[55] Bush deployed the analogy that he knew would send shivers down American spines: "I do not want to see the United States bogged down in any way into some guerrilla warfare. We lived through that once. . . ."[56]

In Rwanda, likewise, the journalists and advocates who invoked the Holocaust parallel met resolute opposition from those who had daily access to the bully pulpit. For every journalist or advocate who likened the killings to the Holocaust, a U.S. government official soon appeared to liken any prospective intervention to Somalia.

One of the most common ways that critics of the analogy have distinguished the recent cases of genocide from the Holocaust is by claiming that the victim group is not entirely innocent. Sociologist and genocide scholar Helen Fein has written that the targets of several recent genocides have been seen as "implicated victims." The Bosnian Muslims did cobble together an army and take up arms to fight Serb and Croat aggression. On occasion, though with nowhere near the systematic and willful frequency of their foes, they also committed excesses. This allowed Warren Christopher to shrug off comparisons by declaring, "I never heard of any genocide by the Jews against the German people."[57] The black/white, devil/angel dichotomy associated with the Holocaust became confused in the Cambodia and Rwanda cases because the perpetrators were eventually overthrown. In Cambodia, once Vietnam had invaded, forcing the Khmer Rouge to flee, the former Khmer Rouge loyalists were seen as victims of familiar Vietnamese aggression, in need of humanitarian and even political support. In Rwanda, a Tutsi-led rebel army had invaded the country in

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1990, and it was this army that finally stopped the Hutu from completing their genocide. In the course of the rebel military operation, Tutsi soldiers committed atrocities in their own right, and their seizure of power unleashed an exodus of millions of Hutu. The image of the victim Tutsi minority was replaced with that of the victorious Tutsi minority and the vanquished Hutu masses.

The invocation of the Holocaust can also alienate many who might otherwise favor protecting a targeted minority. Some American Jews, for instance, reject and actively combat the analogy. While many Jewish organizations and publications actively lobbied for U.S. intervention in Bosnia, others resisted the association.[58] For example, Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post*, often a strong supporter of humanitarian intervention, likened the Holocaust comparison in the Bosnia context to "calling a traffic cop a Nazi for ticketing your car."[59] Elan Steinberg, Executive Director of the World Jewish Congress, said, "In describing them as death camps and describing it as a holocaust, it demeans the memory of the Holocaust and trivializes the very real atrocities going on today, because you lose credibility."[60] Other Jewish leaders went back and forth. Wiesel protested the comparison and yet invoked the analogy between Bosnia and the Holocaust on the steps of the Holocaust Museum. In August 1992, when the concentration camp story first broke, Israeli Prime Minster Yitzhak Rabin said, "These pictures, those stories remind us of the greatest tragedy in the history of the Jewish people—the Holocaust." Yet four days later, appearing on CNN, he railed against the comparison. "There were attempts to compare what goes on in Bosnia to the Holocaust of six million Jews during the Second World War," he said. "By no means one can draw any parallel to the unique tragedy, terrible phenomenon of the Holocaust."[61]

Indeed, the stage of those interested in refuting the likeness is cluttered. The perpetrators of the atrocities, the American and European leaders who oppose intervention, some war veterans, some Jews, and some survivors eschew the comparison. Many scholars caught up in the German *Historikerstreit* also oppose the anology, fearing that Germany will never confront its past if the Holocaust comes to stand for the abstract idea of

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"man's inhumanity to man."[62] Defenders of the Holocaust's uniqueness believe they are staving off any attempt to normalize, historicize, relativize, marginalize, or trivialize the crimes of the Third Reich.[63] These particularists are often right that efforts to contextualize the Holocaust are politically motivated, and they are correct in heeding French sociologist Raymond Aron's call to "save the concepts." But the debate over Holocaust exceptionalism and uniqueness too often degenerates into grotesque competition over who stands atop the hierarchy of the horribles. While corpses pile up, op-ed writers and historians square off as to whether systematic massacres at hand are sufficiently or insufficiently "like" the Holocaust. And historians attempting to preserve the hallowed standing of the Holocaust amid swirling evidence of ongoing mass atrocity defend their ground in a fashion that can sound grossly insensitive to the victims or their descendants. From the standpoint of the individual victims, the contest is akin to asking, as Rabbi Jacob Neusner once put it, "Is our blood redder than theirs?"[64] We are told that, in contrast to Hitler's gas chambers, it was "only" microbes that killed the Native Americans. In contrast to Hitler's exhaustive effort, the Ottomans "only" eliminated one-quarter of the overall Armenian population. In contrast to Hitler's intent to murder, Stalin only really intended to force collectivization and is therefore rescued by the malleable principle of double effect. In contrast to Hitler who deemed anyone born with Jewish blood unredeemable, the Croatian fascists of World War II at least spared some Serbs who converted. In contrast to Hitler who deemed the killing of each Jew a racial and political gain, American slave traders regretted the death of a slave in the inhumane "Middle Passage," at least as a financial loss. Survival, conversion, and killing rates compete in this discourse of the determined.

Even if we could convene a committee to pass final judgment on the question of likeness or uniqueness, or if we could design an abacus to measure suffering or evil, the backlash generated in the meantime still may do damage. In just about every case of genocide since the Holocaust, time and energy has been consumed in the quagmire of definitional warfare. A thick cloud of white noise has often distracted us from the events on

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the ground and elevated an abstract quarrel over an analogy to center stage. When atrocity is happening, abstraction can be the enemy of action. And while hagglers may be correct in noting that contemporary genocides are not exactly like the Holocaust, these cases are not altogether *unlike* the Holocaust either. We must keep our focus on the fact that, regardless of the likeness, the large-scale killing of innocents is underway and needs to be stopped.

Another drawback of the analogy is that, though we have committed ourselves to preventing the Holocaust from happening again, the Holocaust sets a grossly "high" bar for attention or action. Quantitatively, one would hardly want to wait until six million individuals were killed before we concluded that the necessary threshold had been crossed. Qualitatively, the scientific, meticulously plotted plan to kill every single Jew in Europe earns Hitler a special place in history. Rwanda constitutes the only case of genocide since 1945 in which a perpetrator has outlined his intentions as explicitly as Heinrich Himmler did when he declared that "all Jews without exception must die."[65]

Raphael Lemkin, the Polish Jew who coined the word "genocide" in 1944 out of the Greek for people (*geno*) and the Latin for killing (*cide*), did so out of recognition of the need for a standard that was not the Holocaust. In order to ensure that the world's power brokers did not wait again for the mass graves to fill, he introduced the concept of genocide, which hinged on the perpetrators' intent as distinct from the victims' numbers. If Hutu *genocidaire* or Bosnian Serb militia intended to destroy their ethnic foe but managed to kill only "part" of the group, the label of genocide was supposed to apply, and signatories to the international treaty were obliged to act. Lemkin recognized that any crime that was defined on the basis of sheer numbers of victims would leave advocates in the surreal position of waiting for a quota of dead victims to be filled before they could charge genocide or press for outside intervention. He did not want the Holocaust to set the standard for action, because he knew that standard would prove both impossible and hideously undesirable to meet.

Though Holocaustizing can get some of us to tune in to today's atrocities, once the Holocaust has become the frame

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through which we view other killings, it can too easily become a ceiling beneath which all else goes. And once we have entertained the possibility that contemporary killing might resemble that of the Holocaust but in the end locate grounds for distinguishing a contemporary case, we often breathe easier. Once we realize today's crimes are not exactly "like" those of the Holocaust, we all too quickly soothe ourselves with the further notion that "the situation is not so bad after all." In Bosnia, for instance, the international community succeeded in pressuring the Bosnian Serbs into closing the high-profile concentration camps of 1992. After the camps stopped operating, however, death by sniper fire, shelling, and noninstitutionalized massacres continued and gave rise to no such concerted international campaign. When the Serbs' means changed, the United States and other nations looked away, but their end—the destruction of a people—remained constant.

The very scale and nature of genocide makes it difficult to make real to outsiders, but we must remember that to Holocaustize atrocity is not to humanize it. And if we fail to humanize the horrors, they will remain an abstraction. Arthur Koestler attempted to stir Americans out of their passivity in January 1944, to tear down their "dream barriers" and drag them out of their "private, portable cages." In his 1944 *New York Times Magazine* essay, he wrote of the dangers of confronting readers with "the Absolute." "Statistics don't bleed," he wrote, "it is the detail which counts. We are unable to embrace the total process with our awareness; we can only focus on little lumps of reality."[66] Yet today's advocates are often quicker to cite the analogy than they are to offer details about the individual lives affected by the tragedy. The little lumps of reality are lost.

One of the reasons that the exploration of the "success" of the analogy leaves one a little equivocal—praising its attention-getting potential, assuming its positive role in galvanizing humanitarian donations or criminal prosecutions, fearing its backlash, but unsure of its net assets—is that policymakers show few signs of willingness to take the risks required to prevent or suppress genocide. Given this background condition, it is difficult to assess the impact of Holocaustizing on governmental and intergovernmental responses. If synagogue- or churchgo-

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ers, *New York Times* editorialists or cabinet members actually accepted the analogy from the outset—in other words, if we could eliminate the distracting white noise—would it much affect the U.S. response? What if American Jewish leaders believed, while the genocide in Rwanda was underway, that the genocide was *like* the Holocaust? What if every visitor to the Holocaust Museum accepted the parallel between Karadzic and Himmler? I am not sure that unanimity on the likeness of the Holocaust would alter American policy. Though the American Holocaust Museum has rightly attempted to combat American ignorance about its own role in World War II, few Americans are guilt-ridden over the U.S. failure to bomb the train tracks to Auschwitz. Despite the ubiquitous slogan of "never again," most of us are not aware of the world's share of responsibility for the Holocaust. We lament the crimes, to be sure, but most of today's Holocaust scholarship, education, and commemoration does not focus, operationally or rhetorically, on what the United States might—or should—have done differently or sooner. Most Americans remember World War II as a heroic and not a timid victory. It was, as Studs Terkel has reminded us, the "Good War." When reflecting upon the Holocaust, most of us remember Nazi brutality first and foremost. If we think of American participation at all, we conjure up images of General Eisenhower touring the liberated camps, or Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson spearheading the Nuremberg war-crimes trials. Despite extensive historical documentation, many Americans would still be shocked to learn that the Roosevelt administration turned away Jewish refugees (We may remember Pearl Harbor, but who remembers the *St. Louis*?) and suppressed reports of Nazi atrocities. Few recall that Hitler was the one who declared war on the United States and not, as we might now wish, the other way around.

What we really mean by "never again"—to the extent that we "mean" anything in a deliberative sense—is probably a more passive "never again should genocide happen" rather than "never again should we stand idly by while genocide happens." Maybe what we do not want to see repeated is another reign by someone who kills innocent people *and* directly threatens U.S. interests, as Hitler did. Since Hitler did

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both, we should have stopped him, and if *he* should come along again, we will stop him.

The increased awareness of the Holocaust in the United States allows us to remember the dead, to give voice to victims and survivors, and to glorify a chapter in world history in which good prevailed over evil. It does not appear to make us ready or willing to stop genocide.

## CONCLUSION

In an era in which it seems we cannot open the newspaper without seeing a story on contemporary mass violence on one page and a story on some facet of the Holocaust on the next, it is natural that advocates have attempted to package today's victims as approximations of yesterday's. With Holocaust museums and memorials sprouting up around the United States and with the world's leaders caught up in a tidal wave of reflective anguish about the largest genocide of the century, Holocaustizers are probably wise to have tried to exploit that momentum in the interest of prospective rescue.

Does the Holocaust analogy make it more difficult or easier for American leaders and citizens to evade responsibility? Clearly, the analogy can get the attention of reporters, advocates, and, thus, policymakers. But the ensuing debate can also distract all of us from serious policy assessment. The analogy can tap into the moral outrage over past inaction and convince many prominent Jewish leaders and others to step forward. But its use can also alienate Holocaust particularists to such an extent that they actively oppose not only the parallel but also the proposed actions that the parallel was designed to advance. The analogy can help fuel a level of concern that makes it possible for the United States to fund humanitarian aid and war-crimes prosecution efforts. But in so doing, it may only be steering policymakers toward humanitarian or judicial fig leaves and away from political or military solutions that might end the killing.

It is next to impossible to gauge whether Cambodia, Bosnia, or Rwanda would have dropped from the headlines sooner if the Holocaust parallel had not been drawn so regularly. The

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linkage may have made it just a little bit harder for American leaders to do nothing. But with American politicians resolutely opposed to intervening to stop these cases of genocide, it is likely that no amount of Holocaustizing would have generated meaningful action. The mass graves in Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda offer testimony to the fact that the analogy has not succeeded in overcoming political opposition to intervention. This is not surprising, as an analogy is nothing more than a rhetorical device and a cognitive shortcut. Given its understandable limits, advocates may wish to ask themselves not whether they should draw upon the analogy but whether they should draw upon it so heavily. Invoking the Holocaust in appropriate circumstances probably helps. Relying upon it and invoking it to the extent that advocates now do probably hurts. Advocates often treat the Holocaust parallel not merely as an ace up their sleeve but as a card that will trump—almost *by definition*—any contrary moral or practical claim. The Holocaust references have often come to occupy not just center stage but the entire stage, crowding out almost all other argument. The extremity of the event appears to lead advocates to assume the analogy will do all the heavy lifting necessary, when in fact we have seen that the Holocaust analogy can easily be met by a Vietnam or Somalia analogy that will elicit the sort of fear that can quickly negate outrage.

Even when current events remind us of the Holocaust, the analogy might be best employed to introduce a description of the threatened or victimized individuals and a discussion about what should and can be done to help them. But advocates should not give in to the temptation to trust that if the parallel moves them, it will move others equally. They must not rely upon the analogy alone. They must follow it up with reason and persuasion that is aimed at moving people to action. Pointing to an event in the past in order to create meaning in the present should not lead us to forget the power—nor the challenge—of offering a descriptive account of the present that draws upon narratives from individual victims *in the case at hand.*

We too often assume that a link exists between historic consciousness, contemporary conscience, and state action. Someday, perhaps, state behavior will bear out that connection.

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Until then, however, we must muster argument as well as analogy in the struggle.

ENDNOTES

[1]Marla Stone, remarks at the International Conference on Genocide, California State University at Sacramento, 23–24 October 1998. Stone presented a paper entitled "The Bosnian Genocide and the Holocaust: The Power of Historical Analogy."

[2]President Clinton, "Address to the Nation," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, D.C., 24 March 1999.

[3]Though I focus on the American response to atrocity in this essay, it should be noted that no U.S. ally has reacted any more robustly to genocide.

[4]For a detailed survey of American and European media coverage of and governmental responses to the Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia, see Jamie Frederic Metzl, *Western Responses to Human Rights Abuses in Cambodia, 1975–80* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[5]See Senator Dole, *Congressional Record of the United States,* 95th Cong., 2d sess., vol. 124 (22 March 1978): 8119. See McGovern, *Cong. Rec.*, 95th Cong., 2d sess., vol. 124 (9 May 1978): 13019. See Dornan, *Cong. Rec.*, 95th Cong., 2d sess., vol. 124 (12 May 1978): 14193.

[6]Nigel Baker, "Sending in the Troops," *RTNDA Communicator* (February 1996): 25. Quoted in Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 267.

[7]Roy Gutman, "If Only They Could Flee," *Newsday*, 26 July 1992, A4.

[8]Margaret Thatcher in a BBC Television interview, 13 April 1993, as cited in Marion Finlay, "Thatcher Sparks Row over Bosnia," *The Toronto Star*, 14 April 1993.

[9]Cliford Krauss, "U.S. Backs Away from Charge of Atrocities in Bosnia Camps," *New York Times*, 5 August 1992, A12.

[10]John Darnton, "Does the World Still Recognize a Holocaust?" *New York Times*, 25 April 1993, sec. 4, p. 1.

[11]Krauss, "U.S. Backs Away from Charge of Atrocities in Bosnia Camps."

[12]CNN International Correspondents, 9 May 1994, transcript #104.

[13]Jennifer Parmelee, "Fade to Blood: Why the International Answer to the Rwandan Atrocities is Indifference," *Washington Post*, 24 April 1994, C3. Douglas Jehl, "Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings 'Genocide,'" *New York Times*, 10 June 1994. Reuters, "Witness Likens Rwanda to Nazi Atrocities."

[14]Roger Winter, "Journey into Genocide: A Rwanda Diary," *Washington Post*, 5 June 1994, C1.

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[15]Charles Herbert Stember et al., *Jews in the Mind of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 141–142. This poll data is included in the chapter "Holocaust," which offers a thorough survey of American public opinion toward Jews (and Jewish immigration) before, during, and after the Holocaust.

[16]Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 96–97. Avisar notes that Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) was an exception for its attention to the plight of Jews. Avisar cites Lewis Jacobs, "World War II and the American Film," *Cinema Journal* I (Winter 1967–1968): 21.

[17]Jeffrey Schandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30, 34. See also David Margolick, "Television and the Holocaust: An Odd Couple," *New York Times*, 31 January 1999, A31–32.

[18]Schandler, *While America Watches*, 77–78.

[19]James Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), n. 8, p. 87.

[20]Gerd Korman, "The Holocaust in American Historical Writing," *Societas* 2 (Summer 1972): 260–261. See also Samuel G. Freedman, "Laying Claim to Sorrow Beyond Words," *New York Times*, 13 December 1997, A19.

[21]See, for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, forthcoming), 133.

[22]Korman, "The Holocaust in American Historical Writing," 261.

[23]See Novick's discussion of several of these events, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 226–230.

[24]James Carroll, "Shoah in the News: Patterns and Meaning of News Coverage of the Holocaust," discussion paper, The Joan Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 1997, 9. Carroll's study only goes up to 1996, but I have applied his method to Holocaust-related coverage in 1997.

[25]According to the 1997 figures on Capital Attractions, the Holocaust Memorial Museum received two million visitors in 1997 and 1,927,227 in 1996. In comparison, the White House received 1,227,000 visitors in 1997; the Lincoln Memorial, 1,558,000; and the U.S. Supreme Court, 635,420.

[26]The Shoah Foundation has collected more than twenty-nine thousand testimonies in some thirty-five countries in more than twenty-five languages.

[27]Julia Duin, "Handbook May Be Imported to Show Holocaust to Youths," *Washington Times*, 2 September 1998.

[28]Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 120.

[29]Novick quotes Norman Lamm, president of Modern Orthodox Yeshiva University: "With a diminishing birth rate, an intermarriage rate exceeding 40%, Jewish illiteracy gaining ascendance daily—who says that the Holocaust is over? . . . The monster has assumed a different and more benign form . . . but its evil goal remains unchanged: a *Judenrein* world." See Norman Lamm,

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"Schools and Graves," in Ivan L. Tillem, ed., *The 1987–88 Jewish Almanac* (New York: Pacific Press, 1987), 111.

[30]"Book by Green Seen as Help to Israel's Lobby," *American Examiner–Jewish Week*, 30 April 1978. Cited in Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 156. For a lengthy discussion of Zionist uses of the Holocaust, see ibid., 146–169.

[31]"The Shame of Srebrenica," *60 Minutes II*, Wednesday, 10 March 1999.

[32]Azell Murphy Cavaan, "Holocaust Survivors Say Attack May Prevent Another Genocide," *Boston Herald*, 25 March 1999, 32.

[33]Mark Twain advised readers to be sure to get out of experience only the wisdom it contains, "lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one." Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger, *The Bitter Heritage* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), 99.

[34]Fritz, "'Words Cannot Describe. . . ,'" *IPI* Report (May/June 1995): 24, 32. Quoted in Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue*, 281.

[35]Lawrence Langer, *The Age of Atrocity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 40.

[36]"The Obscenity of Understanding: An Evening With Claude Lanzmann," *American Imago* 48 (4) (Winter 1991): 487.

[37]James Bennet, "Clinton Declares U.S. and the World Failed Rwandans," *New York Times*, 26 March 1998, A1.

[38]Dan Burton, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, sess. 103-2, 4 May 1994, 19.

[39]Exchange quoted in William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 47.

[40]Jean Amery, *Jenseits von Schuld und Suhne: Bewaltigungsversuche eined Uberwaltigten* (Munich: Szczesny Verlag, 1966), 59, translated by and quoted in Langer, *The Age of Atrocity*, 51.

[41]Arthur Koestler, "The Nightmare that Is Reality," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 January 1944, sec. 6, p. 5.

[42]"Remarks at the Dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, April 22, 1993," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1994), 479.

[43]Eighty-four percent of American adults and 75 percent of American students agreed with the statement "It is important that people keep hearing about the Holocaust so that it will not happen again." Jennifer Golub and Renae Cohen, *What Do Americans Know about the Holocaust?* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1993), 46–47. When asked, "Are there any situations similar in nature to the Holocaust going on in the world today," 47 percent of adults surveyed answered "yes," while only 26 percent replied "no." Ibid., 60–61. For poll data related to American adults' and students' grasp of the details of the Holocaust, see *Holocaust Denial: What the Survey Data Reveal* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995).

[44]Roy Gutman, *Witness to Genocide* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), xiii, describing reactions to the August 2 article.

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[45]Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998), preface; emphasis added.

[46]The Holocaust moves many outside the United States as well. In late May 1994, the Israeli cabinet issued a statement calling on the international community to "halt the [Rwandan] slaughter" and offering medical and humanitarian assistance. Having "suffered bitterly during the Holocaust," the statement said, "Israel cannot be indifferent as it witnesses the shock of Rwanda." David Makovsky, Reuters, *Jerusalem Post*, 23 May 1994, 4.

[47]For the UNTAC cost estimate, see GAO Briefing Report, 29 February 1996, National Security and International Affairs Division, at <http://www.cambodia.org/facts/gaobr296.html> (accessed 9 February 1999). For the U.S. financial commitment to the UNTAC, see Heather M. O'Brien, "Cambodian Peacekeeping," *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 April 1992.

[48]On the total UNPROFOR budget, see the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations web site at <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unprof_p.htm> (accessed 9 February 1999). For the U.S. share of the total, see *Peace Operations: U.S. Costs in Support of Haiti, Former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda* (Letter Report, 6 March 1996, GAO/NSIAD-96-38).

[49]Clinton requested $320 million on July 20, 1994, but the U.S. Congress only authorized $170 million of that request in September 1994. See Milton Leitenberg, "Rwanda, 1994: International Incompetence Produces Genocide," *Peacekeeping and International Relations* 23 (1994). See Thomas Lippman, "U.S. Costs Mounting in Rwanda, Caribbean; No Provision Made for Unexpected Spending," *Washington Post*, 27 August 1994, A10; and Thomas W. Lippman, "U.S. Troop Withdrawal Ends Frustrating Mission to Save Rwandan Lives," *Washington Post,* 3 October 1994, A11.

[50]As mentioned above, the NATO military intervention of August and September 1995 in Bosnia helped bring the war to a swift end, but the operation was prompted more by strategic concerns than by the genocide, which had already been carried out. When it came to Kosovo, numerous pressure groups and editorialists urged the United States to bomb the Serbs in response to an increase in violence in the province. However, virtually none of these advocates likened Serb abuses in Kosovo to those committed during the Holocaust. *After* NATO began bombing Serb targets in March 1999, however, the analogy surfaced, as the scenes of a mass Albanian exodus and the harrowing tales of atrocities convinced many that the parallel suddenly applied.

[51]Freedman, "Laying Claim to Sorrow Beyond Words."

[52]Niki Cervantes, "Mayor's problems with Black Muslim leader," *United Press International*, 16 September 1985.

[53]"ADL Hits Christian Fundamentalists," *The Forward*, 10 June 1994, 4; my italics. *The Forward* piece surveys an Anti-Defamation League study on right-wing, evangelical Christianity.

[54]C. Everett Koop, "The Sanctity of Life," *Journal of the Medical Society of New Jersey* 75 (June 1978): 62. Quoted in Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 241.

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[55]President Bush's statement in Colorado Springs, Colorado, announcing the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, 6 August 1992.

[56]Oberdorfer, "Week of Publicity and Policymaking Started Off with a Chilling Headline," *Washington Post*, 7 August 1992, A26.

[57]Elaine Sciolino, "U.S. Goals on Bosnia," *New York Times*, 19 May 1993, A10.

[58]For instance, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League published a joint "Open Letter to World Leaders" in the *New York Times*, headlined "Stop the Death Camps." The advertisement declared: "To the blood-chilling names of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and other Nazi death camps there seem now to have been added the names of Omarska and Brcko, where it is reported thousands have been starved, tortured and executed, and cremated as fodder for animals. Is it possible that fifty years after the Holocaust, the nations of the world, including our own, will stand by and do nothing, pretending we are helpless? . . . Every day we delay [action], innocent men, women and children will be slaughtered." *New York Times*, 5 August 1992, A14.

[59]Richard Cohen, "Nothing New Here," *Washington Post*, 22 April 1993, A23.

[60]Quoted in Nina Bernstein, "Holocaust Parallel to Bosnia," *New York Times*, 22 October 1992. According to Bernstein, Steinberg "stressed the difference between Hitler's 'Final Solution' and what he called 'the horrors of warfare in a very complex political situation.'"

[61]CNN News, transcript #126-4, 8 August 1992; CNN News, transcript #93-4, 12 August 1992.

[62]Alvin Rosenfeld, *Thinking about the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 131.

[63]Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique?* (New York: Westview Press, 1996), 4.

[64]Jacob Neusner, *The Public Side of Learning* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 129. Quoted in Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 198.

[65]Steven T. Katz, "The Uniqueness of the Holocaust: The Historical Dimension" in Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique?* 33.

[66]Koestler, "The Nightmare That Is a Reality," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 January 1944.

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*Maya Todeschini*

# Illegitimate Sufferers: A-bomb Victims, Medical Science, and the Government

*The bomb is not a matter of survival, it is a matter of living.*

*—Yamamoto Mitsuko, A-bomb victim*

THE A-BOMBS THAT WERE DROPPED on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, not only caused the destruction of two communities and the deaths of countless people but also "created" a new group of human beings—hibakusha, literally "A-bombed persons."[1] Now that more than half a century has passed since the bombings, they may seem like a distant past to many, but they are a living, and painful, reality to the people who survived the explosion and who have since struggled to come to terms with their experiences. Hibakusha share not only traumatic memories of the A-bomb explosion itself but also, and above all, a common identity as the "radiation-exposed," living with the reality and perpetual threat of delayed radiation effects.[2] The feeling that they are carrying an "unexploded bomb" inside their bodies has not abated over the decades, and despite scientific assertions that deny the existence of genetic effects (a point I shall come back to later), such fears extend to their children and to future generations.

Even if the psychological effects of radiation exposure are to a certain extent cross-culturally shared, hibakushas' experiences of radiation illnesses did not take place in a vacuum; they

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were shaped by the values, beliefs, and symbols of their culture, as well as by the history and politics of their society.[3] "Radiation" came to be perceived as a polluting, defiling substance, and thus became integrated in a larger system of beliefs about purity and pollution, which are highly developed and systematized in Japanese society and rooted in Shintô and Buddhist conceptions. Contamination fears are an integral theme in community reactions to hibakusha, who are suspected of "transmitting" the impurity of death through genetic transmission or through "contagion" via bodily contact; this motivates discrimination in marriage and the workplace. In this regard, majority attitudes to A-bomb victims bear similarities to those toward other minorities in Japan, such as the Burakumin, who are perceived as "impure" because of their traditional association with "defiling" professions, or AIDS patients, who present a modern form of fatal defilement.[4]

Yet "radiation pollution" poses some unique problems to the community. Because of its man-made nature (at least in connection with warfare), its still "mysterious" character, and the historical and social contexts in which it developed—the occupation, Japan's path to prosperity, and the Cold War—it became charged with highly political meanings, in addition to presenting undeniable scientific interest and intractable medical problems.

In this essay, I examine the ways in which scientists, doctors, and government officials responded to A-bomb victims, and "radiation illness" in particular, and explore the effects of scientific and legal discourses on hibakusha. As I shall show, "biomedicine," deployed by both the Japanese and American scientific and political community, emerged as a hegemonic force in shaping definitions of hibakusha; in the process, victims' own experiences and needs, as well as the social and moral questions they raised by their very existence, were repressed and denied. This process—which epitomizes other approaches to massive, man-made suffering in the contemporary age[5]—continues today, since hibakushas' children, "second-generation victims," have inherited their aging parents' burden and are likely to pass it to their progeny in turn. They, even

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more than their parents, tell us that no bombs are needed to create and perpetuate the dilemmas posed by radiation.

## HIBAKUSHA NARRATIVES: A VOICE OF THEIR OWN

The objectifying logic of scientific and legal discourses is best brought out by victims' personal accounts. For my understanding of the issues in this essay, I relied principally on hibakusha narratives, and particularly women's testimonies, from published autobiographical writings but also from more "informal" accounts, such as grassroots publications, oral testimonies, and my own interviews with hibakusha carried out in Hiroshima and other cities between 1991 and 1993. Of special relevance for this essay are the writings by and interviews with Hayashi Kyôko, a prominent author and Nagasaki survivor who lives in Tokyo, and two women's groups—the Osaka Association of Female A-bomb Victims and the Yamashita Group in Hiroshima—that formed in the late 1960s as forums for female self-expression and activism.[6] These hibakusha have been active for over thirty years, and they have provided extensive life histories that relate their experiences from the time of the bombings up through the present day.

The women were adolescents when the bombings occurred, and they have lived with their identity as hibakusha throughout their adult lives. Unlike the majority of hibakusha testimonies, their narratives focus not so much on the bombings themselves but on "what came later," in conjunction with the reality and risks of bomb-related illnesses: the loss of educational and professional opportunities, discrimination in marriage and in the workplace, the fear of bearing children, the disruption of family life, and often material poverty. Thus they draw attention to not only some of the more problematic aspects of Japanese society, revealed in its treatment of disenfranchised minorities, but also the social and cultural construction of hibakusha experience, through gender, class, indigenous conceptions of the body, health, and sickness, as well as local historical and political contexts.

The women vividly describe their encounters with scientists, doctors, and state officials and the sense of anger and revolt

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they often took away from such encounters. Their experiences show that hibakusha and radiation illnesses are contested categories, with scientific, biomedical, and judicial discourses often at odds with victims' own interpretations.

## "AN ILLEGAL DISEASE": EMERGING INTERPRETATIONS

Any discussion of the scientific and political reactions to hibakusha must begin in the immediate postbomb period. How did Japanese and American authorities and scientists respond to the emergence of A-bomb victims and the effects of radiation? The atomic explosions caused instantaneous devastation and massive injury to the human body, but their most terrifying aspect was acute radiation illness, which led to the deaths of countless survivors who seemed apparently uninjured. Neither fourteen-year-old Hayashi Kyôko, the hibakusha author-to-be, nor seventeen-year-old Takagi Shizuko, who became a cofounder of the Osaka group, sustained serious external injuries, but they received extensive doses of radiation because they were less than 2 kilometers from the hypocenter. Both suffered from acute radiation symptoms (including diarrhea, purpura, high fever, and hair loss). Such hibakusha were desperate for information and medical care, but the authorities, both Japanese and American, did little to alleviate their plight in the days and weeks that followed the bombings. On August 14, the Japanese government announced that the two bombs were "new type atomic bombs," without any further explanation on the nature and dangers of radiation. Japanese scientific survey teams had entered Hiroshima as early as August 6, and pathological autopsies were initiated on August 10, indicating that government officials were well informed about the effects of radiation.[7]

Until the institution of the national hibakusha relief law more than a decade later (in 1957), the state did nothing to help or inform the victims; hibakusha were left to their own devices, and the care of inexperienced local doctors and hospitals. Such neglect contrasted with the early and continuing interest displayed by Japanese scientists; although a national narrative attributes the scientific appropriation of hibakusha solely to "Americans," Japanese scientists demonstrated just as much

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interest, even if it became constrained by occupation censorship (see below).

The American government began investigating the effects of the bombing on the day of Japan's surrender, August 15. In its initial official pronouncements, it staunchly denied the existence of radiation effects, attributing radiation deaths to "Japanese propaganda."[8] In effect, American officials attempted to treat the bomb as "just another," if particularly powerful, bomb and to minimize the politically bothersome possibility of delayed radiation effects. Such interpretations were easily accepted by a Japanese government that was eager not to anger the powerful occupier and that wanted to emphasize its "rebirth" from militarism.

When the radiation effects became too glaring to be denied any longer, the U.S. government established a censorship code (the so-called Press Code) on all information relating to the bomb, and particularly radiation effects, believed to be disruptive to "public peace and morals." The code remained in effect until 1952, when the San Francisco Treaty was signed. All the while, scientists continued their studies on hibakusha, now firmly under GHQ supervision. However, most of the data collected from Japanese physicians working "on the ground" were now labeled "top secret" and sent to the United States for analysis.[9]

If the overall impact and efficacy of censorship remain controversial, it doubtlessly prevented hibakusha from learning more about the consequences of their A-bomb exposure and from sharing their experiences with others.[10] Many literary accounts of the bomb and the suffering inflicted were censored or prohibited. For example, author Ôta Yôko's pioneering account, written in late 1945, with its graphic description of radiation illnesses and passages criticizing both Japanese and American officials, was partly censored and its publication delayed.[11]

Equally seriously, the Press Code also inhibited the circulation of valuable medical material among local doctors, who were overwhelmed by the demands of treating the new, mysterious illnesses caused by radiation. As Hayashi Kyôko put it, "For the local doctors, we hibakusha were the 'unknown' (*michi*

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*no mono*). They didn't know how to treat us, and often they couldn't say much more than 'please eat good food.'"[12] Another woman relates the same feeling: "One month after the bombing, my friend and I went to get our blood examined; by that time doctors knew that survivors had problems with their blood. We were told that our white blood corpuscles had abnormally increased, but we had no idea what this meant, but neither did the doctor! At the time we didn't have any health problems, so we just said, 'thank you,' and went home."

Among the radiation effects that caused the greatest agony in the community were those related to human reproduction. In general, young and proliferating cells and tissues are very sensitive to radiation, and radiation damage to babies born to women who were exposed while pregnant was particularly serious: many were stillborn, born with major congenital abnormalities (especially microcephaly), or suffered from growth disorders.[13] There were also frequent cases of miscarriage and premature birth among exposed pregnant women.[14] It was no wonder that many hibakusha feared that their reproductive functions had become "perverted" or even destroyed by radiation. Hayashi writes that she came to see her pubescent body as a "shrunken, worm-eaten apple," devoured from the inside by radiation; she added that "Nagasaki's barren landscape reflected my own self."[15] She and many of her friends also dreaded the onset of menarche—which they associated with massive hemorrhaging, one of the symptoms of radiation illness—and confessed their fears about childbearing in the face of rumors of "monstrous" babies quietly disposed of by their mothers: "We were afraid we'd give birth to abnormal children. It was such a contradiction: More than most people, we were aware of the value and weight of human life, its preciousness, yet we were terrified that we should nip unborn life in the bud."[16] Thus, from the very beginning, bodily anxieties extended beyond the self and encompassed the child to come.

Such feelings must also be placed against the larger context of traditional pollution beliefs and the perception of radiation as the "pollution of death." Such beliefs have special relevance for women. Women's bodies, and especially their reproductive capacities and blood, are considered to be ritually polluted in

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Japan (as is the case in many other societies), and female hibakusha, who "combined" the impurity of death (radiation) and that of blood (reproduction), were perceived as "doubly dangerous," and thus evoked contamination anxieties that were particularly intense.[17] Moreover, in another pattern that applies cross-culturally, it is women, rather than men, who are blamed for sterility or abnormality in offspring.[18]

A pervasive link was established in the popular imagination between the dangers of radiation and the "contaminated blood" of hibakusha women; one account compared Nagasaki girls to "outcasts" who "never stop bleeding" and whom "nobody wants to marry."[19] Such beliefs did not always operate at a conscious level, but they could be very potent, especially in rural areas, and were magnified when women bore burn scars (these scars, called keloids, were taken as "evidence" of bodily contamination).[20] In popular narratives on hibakusha, including films and novels, leukemia (the prime symbol for "contaminated blood") is often singled out as a "female" disease, just as hysteria was in nineteenth-century Europe.[21] Such beliefs and images contributed to marriage discrimination in a society that above all values women's "nurturing" and life-giving capacities. The Osaka group has several members who were unable to marry though they very much desired to do so, and many of my informants' daughters face similar problems today.

To a certain extent, beliefs about hibakusha women's "contaminated bodies" were, and continue to be, internalized by the victims themselves; their narratives express an acute preoccupation with blood disorders ("impure blood"), often in conjunction with menstrual ailments, and fears in connection with childbirth and children's health. Hayashi's experiences of pregnancy and childbirth were less than idyllic, and in her writings she repeatedly asks her son to "forgive her" for "having marked him with my stain."

The theme of "perverted blood" provides a constant undercurrent in hibakusha women's health histories. According to recent unpublished statistics by medical social workers in Hiroshima, "blood disorders" are the most frequently cited "subjective symptom" by women who apply for medical aid,

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and a comparatively higher number of female victims complain of such ailments than their male counterparts.[22]

Female "vulnerability" to radiation was not merely "imagined" or subjectively experienced; women's reproductive organs were highly sensitive to radiation damage, resulting in abnormally high levels of ovarian, uterine, and breast cancers among exposed women.[23] Such data, the significance of which fully appeared only two decades after the bombing or even later (due to the long incubation periods of these cancers), led Hayashi to conclude that "radiation was particularly bent on destroying women's reproductive organs."[24]

Disturbances in reproductive function, both male and female, were also the subject of intense scientific curiosity from a very early period.[25] Hayashi, for example, recalls that she and her classmates were interrogated in embarrassing detail about their menstruations by a team of Japanese researchers: "Are your menstrual periods heavy? How frequent are they? Have they stopped altogether? Did you get your first period after you were exposed to radiation?"[26]

Scientists concluded that fertility, whether male or female, was not lastingly affected by radiation (except among those who were exposed to extremely high doses, many of whom died in the weeks or months after the bombing) and that the high incidence of abnormal births was limited to fetuses exposed in utero.[27] But aside from the fact that such studies were unavailable to hibakusha at the time, it makes little sense to contrast this "scientific truth" with victims' own interpretations; the very fact that their reproductive functions attracted scientific scrutiny sent the implicit message that there was a problem, and it was inevitable that hibakusha should be lastingly affected by, and identify with, the tragic experiences of fellow victims and their offspring.

The cultural potency of pollution beliefs is also revealed in the popular image of radiation as a "poison," a "substance" that could be transmitted but also potentially expelled from the body. Suggestive in this regard is the widespread use of folk remedies (such as herbal and moxa treatments), based on Shintô beliefs designed to "purge" and "expel" polluted states. Some of my informants are still firmly convinced that they owe their

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survival and health to this day to such popular remedies, especially when they were administered by loved ones; families, and especially mothers, emerged as a kind of symbolic counterpoint to the "coldness" displayed by scientists.

Many hibakusha also believed that bodily "elimination processes," such as bleeding and vomiting, and "purgative" techniques, such as bathing and profuse sweating, could contribute to "flushing the poison out" of their bodies. The same "detoxifying" function was attributed to external injuries, especially burn wounds; as one woman who sustained extensive burns said, "I believe even now that the radiation in my body was expelled through blood, pus, and sweat."

Such deeply held convictions about radiation illnesses emerged at the very time when official reactions sought to minimize or deny them, and they remain undeterred by scientific arguments to the contrary. This is true for both anxieties surrounding reproductive function (particularly with respect to women's bodies) and the view of radiation as a "poison" deep inside victims' cells that waits to "become active" if purgative methods fail. Above all, these cultural/symbolic responses can be seen as a way of giving meaning to the mystery of radiation, "cutting it down" to the manageable, human size of impurities and poisonous substances. For my informants, they became an embodied memory of suffering and loss, and a form of resistance against official responses that denied the victims both understanding and legitimacy—a process that continues to this day.

## HIBAKUSHA AND "SCIENCE": FROM VICTIMS TO GUINEA PIGS

With respect to scientific discourses on hibakusha and their political uses, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC) dispatched by the U.S. government in 1946 for the expressed purpose of researching "long-term radiation effects on survivors" (including cancers, leukemia, sterility, and genetic alterations) as well as the ABCC's contemporary equivalent, the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF), which continues scientific studies in Hiroshima today, occupy a central place.

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The ABCC-RERF's studies are widely considered to be the most important and extensive data on radiation effects, held to be both reliable and accurate. Given occupation censorship, the ABCC occupied a virtual monopoly in studies of delayed radiation effects for nearly a decade and has played an instrumental role in the elaboration of medical laws concerning hibakusha. The RERF has continued this "tradition" since 1975 and is one of the institutions habilitated for carrying out routine medical examinations of hibakusha. The ABCC-RERF has important links with the government and the scientific elite, both American and Japanese, making it directly related to political authority in both countries.[28] As a result, critical scrutiny of this organism and the manner in which it practices "science" seems all the more important.

When the ABCC set up an impressive research institution atop a hill overlooking Hiroshima city in 1950, the victims initially hoped that they could get much-needed treatment and learn more about the consequences of their A-bomb exposure. However, as it turned out, the ABCC only "investigated" the bomb's medical effects and as a matter of policy refused to provide treatment to victims, claiming that this was the responsibility of local physicians. Ultimately, it seems that medical care was not provided because this would have been construed, by both the Americans and the Japanese, as a form of "atonement" and an admission of guilt; this interpretation would have delegitimized the use of the bombs and was thus unacceptable to the U.S. government.[29]

At any rate, it was inevitable that the ABCC's no-treatment policy would become the primary bone of contention in the community. Since hibakusha were only "examined," they came to feel that they were being used as "guinea pigs" for scientific research or, even worse, for the preparation of future nuclear wars—a suspicion that was seemingly corroborated by the fact that the ABCC was supported by funding from the Atomic Energy Commission. The ABCC's "aggressive" diagnostic policies—carrying out detailed physical examinations, including taking blood and urine samples and X-rays, as well as postmortem examinations—exacerbated this charge and contributed to the sense that hibakushas' bodies were misappropriated and

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objectified. Accusations of the ABCC as a sinister, even diabolical, institution must be placed within this context.

The RERF self-defensively emphasizes in its introductory brochure that "the objective of the RERF is to conduct research and studies for peaceful purposes," but it has never quite managed to get rid of its negative reputation.[30] Concluding his extensive report on the ABCC-RERF, Matsuzaka Yoshimasa states that local citizens still feel uncomfortable with the RERF ("Who knows what's really going on there?") and ends with an evocative appeal for the institution to "come down the mountain" (*yama kara kudari yo*) and shorten the geographical and metaphorical distance that separates it from hibakusha.[31]

The ABCC remains one of the most vivid memories among my informants. It became a focus of resentment not only against the bomb, but also against "science" and the manner in which it was used to dehumanize the victims. As a member of the Yamashita group relates, "I always had this feeling of great loneliness when I went there. I was scared of that place. . . ."

Her friend recalls:

> They were always polite and friendly, asking me about "how I was feeling," etc., and giving me coffee and sandwiches. But they never told me about the results. Young and married as I was, I had to undress and put on a white cloth, and they'd examine me thoroughly. I had problems with my uterus and they wanted to keep examining it. And they took countless X-rays, despite the fact that I'd received so much radiation anyway! I wasn't allowed to wear socks, and my feet would get cold. They just told me that I was extremely anemic and gave me some sort of medicine, but it made me terribly sick and I stopped taking it. Perhaps they were testing the medicine, too? It gradually dawned on me, why as a victim, do I help the aggressor? Why do I have to get examined, give my urine and blood? You feel uncomfortable and cold. You don't know what's going on. Indeed, I was stupid.

Being subjected to humiliating examinations is a recurrent theme in hibakushas' narratives on the ABCC (and other scientific groups), and particularly in the women's accounts. One can readily imagine that such exams could be traumatizing to women raised in the prewar education system, who had been taught to be chaste and to fear Americans as "devils." I vividly

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remember speaking to a Hiroshima resident who, after a few glasses of sake, confessed that he felt "unspeakable hate" to this day for the American scientists who had examined his mother nude. The theme of the "violation" of women's bodies at the hands of foreign scientists reverberates to this day and is one example of the manner in which the scientific response to hibakusha became "gendered," as well as conflated with race, in individual and collective memory—women's violation can also be read as "penetration" of Japanese culture by the foreign "other."

The way in which the ABCC managed its research materials also became a contentious issue in the community. Given its closed character, the ABCC was generally protective of its information, making it difficult for victims, doctors, and non-ABCC scientists to gain access to medical materials. Moreover, in line with general occupation policy, it tended to minimize the effects of radiation, issuing soothing official statements to this effect and sometimes "reassuring" hibakusha that their complaints had nothing to do with radiation. Several scientists observed that the ABCC underplayed both acute and delayed radiation effects in its publications.[32] An extreme case is that of a mother who took her microcephalic son (irradiated in utero) to the ABCC only to be told that her son's illness was due to "malnutrition." She further writes that she was given some money, rather than advice or consolation, after her son's examination. Hers was not an isolated incidence, since the ABCC had a tendency to ascribe hibakushas' health problems to their poverty and low socioeconomic status, which, according to ABCC officials, predated the bombings. One critic's observation that many ABCC officials (who were drawn from the scientific elite, both American and Japanese) looked "down" upon the victims and imputed their protests to the "ignorance" they associated with poverty rings true in the face of such examples.[33]

The ABCC's tendency to deploy "science" with sometimes covertly political motives appears most clearly in the area of genetic effects. The ABCC followed a consistent policy of denying the existence of genetic mutations and contributed to an extremely "optimistic" image of delayed radiation effects, an

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image that is perpetuated by the RERF and often used to advertise the bomb's supposed "harmlessness" in affecting victims over time, including succeeding generations.

In fact, as Susan Lindee's analysis shows persuasively, the "genetics study" was shaped as much by Cold War politics and public concerns about radiation as it was by "pure science." The very manner in which "genetic mutations" were defined and studied was highly selective to begin with, and the study's planners were pressured to downplay genetic alterations in their official publications due to rising public awareness about radiation risks.[34] For example, the authors of a 1953 report chose to discount stillbirth effects and minimize "sex ratio effects" to "avoid misinterpretation by the popular press." The American press readily reported (and often exaggerated) such statements: for example, after an interview with then-ABCC director Robert Holmes, *U.S. News and World Report* in 1955 ran the exuberant headline "Thousands of Babies, No A-bomb Effects."

Other critics also point out a whole series of methodological problems with the genetic study, including insufficiently sensitive research methods and the possibility of recessive mutations that could show up in later generations.[35] ABCC-RERF officials are well aware of such problems, even if they choose not to emphasize them in official publications. For example, the RERF's American chief of research, whom I interviewed in 1992, admitted that an "overly crude test methodology" might have played a role in the fact that his team had found "absolutely nothing" on genetic effects in the second generation. He stated matter-of-factly, "It all depends on your research methodology, and on the manner in which you interpret the facts; science is nothing else but a public consensus." It seemed to be a surprisingly accurate and candid assessment of the manner in which the ABCC-RERF has handled "science" despite its official assertions of scientific "objectivity."

At any rate, scientific "reassurances" in the 1950s with respect to the "lack" of genetic effects were of little consolation to hibakusha, who were alarmed by the high incidence of leukemia during that period, particularly among those who were exposed close to the hypocenter.[36] Scientists denied that

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the children of such hibakusha were at a higher than average risk, but there were some tragic, well-publicized cases of children of hibakusha who died of leukemia, and it was only natural that even one such case should prove devastating to parents who felt guilty about having given birth at all. The experiences of two Osaka women hibakusha who lost their adolescent children to leukemia were a primary motivating factor for founding the Osaka group. As the group concludes in a brochure, which chronicles the death of one of the children, "The number of second-generation victims who suffer from fatal diseases is not important. Even one case of hereditary effects of radioactive matter constitutes an unforgivable sin against justice and humanity."

Anxieties about radiation damage were further provoked by a historic event, the "Lucky Dragon" incident in 1954, in which a Japanese fishing boat was contaminated by radioactive fallout; a member of the crew died from acute radiation illness. Hayashi Kyôko connected the man's death immediately with the health of her then-one-year-old son.

> After [the fisherman] died . . . we became frightened about the health of our children. I grabbed the wrist of my son, who was playing with a truck, and searched for his pulse. The weak pulsations reached my fingertips. They seemed too feeble to support a life, and I was afraid that they should stop beating. I was worried whether my son had the life energy to grow up to be an adult.[37]

Hayashi's observation about "life energy" is suggestive with respect to another culturally patterned reaction to radiation illness that is related to a key notion in East Asian medical tradition, that of *ch'i* (*ki* in Japanese: vital essence, breath, or energy). The "loss" or "blockage" of this energy is believed to cause all kinds of illnesses and disturbances, both within the person's body and in interpersonal relationships. To Hayashi, her own *ki*, that of her son, and that of other radiation victims is experientially connected.

Her fears of "transmitting" an illness to her son must also be related to the strong cultural emphasis on the "unbreakable" mother-child tie (Takie Lebra calls it "mammalian symbiosis"); it is common to see the child literally as a "split part" (*bunshin*)

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of the mother's body.[38] This makes it difficult for women to conceive that their own children might be in perfect health if they themselves are not (and vice versa).

These are only a few examples to demonstrate that hibakusha tend to use the terms "hereditary" and "disease" in a very wide sense in connection with radiation damage, encompassing experiential, cultural, and social aspects beyond purely "medical" factors. However, ABCC scientists had little interest in discovering such problems; their interactions with their inappropriately named "patients" were limited to physical examinations and the collection of blood and cell samples. If they were unable to discover "objective evidence" of biological damage, the victims were declared "healthy" regardless of their own interpretations. This tendency, of course, was not limited to the ABCC-RERF, but applies to the scientific/biomedical approach to radiation illness in general.

Within the ABCC, the pressure to discount individual suffering was apparently so strong that it prevented individual physicians from having any meaningful contact with their patients. In a highly revealing unpublished report completed in 1955, a former ABCC doctor writes that he realized that "none of us working here really knew any of the patients."[39] He decided to carry out "lengthy conversations" with a number of hibakusha (albeit without ABCC permission) after having noticed that "much valuable information could be obtained" with the help of good interpreters and genuine interest for the patients. He discovered that most patients "live in fear" and suffer from the "negative influence of friends and relatives who treat them as 'invalid' (sic) and 'useless'"; he summarizes such problems as "Atomic Bomb Stress," adding that the ABCC is "completely unaware" of such issues. Suggesting that "nothing comparable to Atomic Bomb Stress exists in the history of man," he maintained that it is necessary to "delve deeply into people's histories" and requested an "additional six months" at the ABCC as well as funding to pursue his project. His request was denied, and the project was discontinued. Thus, individual ABCC members were pressured to "abstain" from studying victims' experiences altogether. Even if such pressures have abated over the years, things do not seem to have changed that much, judging

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from my recent interview with the U.S. chief of research, who admitted that he has "never once talked to hibakusha personally," although he had been in Hiroshima for over five years.

Arguably, the distancing processes that operate in day-to-day interactions with hibakusha and in the scientific discourses that are applied to them have remained an integral part in the RERF, and indeed characterize much of the "production" of scientific/medical knowledge on hibakusha. As Lindee put it, "[M]aking the suffering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki disappear . . . was . . . a long-term act of scientific work."[40]

In 1980, Hayashi raised the following rhetorical question: "Are we women living witnesses to the inhumanity of the bomb, or living proofs of its harmlessness? Will we be used as 'medicine' against the nuclear allergy?"[41] Judging from recent scientific reports, her question remains an open one. Researchers have issued reassuring statements about the "unexpected longevity of hibakusha" and the "lack" of genetic effects on hibakusha offspring; studies that give higher risk rates are belittled as "advocacy documents." The RERF reported in 1991 that the overall risk of death from cancer among bomb survivors "has proved only [sic] 2.5 percent higher than normal." A former director of the department of statistics and epidemiology at the National Academy of Sciences concluded in 1995—not coincidentally, the bomb's fiftieth anniversary—that "only [sic] about 1,500 people have died from radiation-caused cancers in fifty years," and "that the original fears of other long-term effects like accelerated aging and genetic damage among the survivors and their children have proven almost entirely unfounded."[42] Perhaps the most glaring example, which also illustrates the dehumanizing effects of scientific jargon, is a 1992 article that appeared in *Science*. It claimed that "radiation emitted by the bomb was less effective in producing cancer than has been assumed" and that the "bomb's radioactive output needs recalculating," making it seem as though the "experiment" needed to be repeated all over again to allow scientists to make the correct calculations this time.[43] These reports neglect to mention that much uncertainty persists in measuring the medical effects of radiation (for example, "permissible" radiation doses are much debated), and that today's nuclear

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weapons make such claims regarding the bomb's "innocuousness" painfully obsolete.

My informants are little impressed by such reports, which they dismiss as "one more expression of scientific perversion." Today, they continue to denounce the bomb and radiation in writings that might be scientifically "inaccurate" but that reflect a deeply felt conviction that human beings and A-bombs cannot coexist. As Hayashi wrote, "Our wounds have been inflicted deliberately, by calculation. . . . And because of these calculations, we and our children continue to suffer."[44]

No matter what "science" says about hibakushas' "wounds"—which are as much individual as collective—victims' testimonies will remain as the "power of the word" in its most primal, original sense: the making of humanness, for both self and others, and the "re-membering" of human bodies that have been, or are threatening to become, dis-membered.

## "PROBLEM PATIENTS": THE DILEMMAS OF MEDICALIZATION

I have focused on hibakusha as "research objects," but what if we think of them as "patients"? With the institution of a hibakusha relief law in 1957, the state took on a growing role in providing medical coverage for hibakusha, and over the decades specialized institutions were created to provide medical checkups and treatment. Doctors became expert in diagnosing and treating hibakusha. Nevertheless, the "hibakusha health-care complex" inherited the fundamental problem epitomized by the ABCC-RERF: a narrowly biomedical orientation, which tended to focus on "objective symptoms" and neglect the various psychological and sociocultural factors that influence victims' experiences. If we use a key distinction in the medical anthropological literature, researchers and doctors have focused only on "disease" (a core of bodily symptoms believed to be related to the bomb) and neglected "illness."

When applied to bomb-induced illnesses, however, a biomedical approach is all the more problematic since there is no type of specific clinical pathology of radiation illness; a radiation-induced cancer is no different "in form" from another cancer. Doctors can thus only *infer* that their patients' illness is

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due to radiation, and most often only by comparing a case to averages taken from the nonhibakusha controls and other "objective data." However, as Ôta Yôko wrote in 1955, hibakusha are "incurable" (*fuchi*) and thus resemble terminally ill patients, but many "are not even sick" and thus cannot "marshal" the data that are needed by physicians.[45]

It is no wonder that encounters between hibakusha and doctors are often very tense affairs. Hibakusha tend to feel that doctors minimize, underestimate, or even deny their symptoms, while doctors often characterize hibakusha as "difficult" patients whose complaints are either unwarranted or cannot be adequately diagnosed and treated; hibakusha are proverbial "problem patients" to their medical system.

The problems generated by a narrow reliance on the biomedical model were heightened by the institution of the hibakusha relief laws, which provided free health checkups and medical treatment as well as financial allowances for certain designated illnesses; this put added pressure on hibakusha (and well-meaning doctors) to transform "subjective complaints" into objective, verifiable symptoms and may have led many victims to overemphasize their bodily complaints in order to receive treatment and qualify for benefits. Bodily complaints, thus, can *also* be interpreted as a form of resistance against normative biomedical definitions of illness, which tend to exclude many subjective symptoms.[46]

The laws also allocated a disproportionate amount of power to doctors, who effectively determine a patient's eligibility for medical treatment and economic benefits. The patients' "stakes" for having their complaints legitimized thus acquired a starkly material dimension in addition to the medical, moral, and psychological ones. Many of my informants, who already felt uncomfortable about asking for "free" treatment and benefits, were offended by the unsympathetic attitudes of their doctors. One member of the Osaka group recalls her experience when she applied for a particular allowance:

> The young doctor I consulted told me: "There are many people, older than you, who suffer from more severe illnesses—we can't give you special treatment just because you're a hibakusha. If you

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> really want that allowance, I can do it for you but you should be aware that many people are worse off." So I backed off: what are you supposed to do when someone talks to you like this?

Hibakusha, and perhaps women especially, are often reluctant to challenge their doctors, who are perceived as being far "superior" in the social hierarchy and in their technical knowledge. As one woman said, "We'd been raised to consider doctors as eminent people, worthy of respect." The term used to address doctors in Japan is "*sensei*" (master), the same as for professors and other well-regarded professions.

The institution of biannual checkups was welcomed by most victims, but it also had the paradoxical effect of perpetuating the impression among some hibakusha that they were *bound* to develop a serious illness sooner or later; this was all the more ironic since scientists, who continued their studies throughout this period (via the ABCC-RERF or other research institutions), tended to insist that delayed effects, and especially genetic effects, were "not as bad" as initially feared. In the case of second-generation hibakusha, this contradiction was the most obvious: the Health and Welfare Ministry instituted routine checkups for this group in 1973, while claiming that there were "no genetic effects" on second-generation victims and that these checkups were "purely a research activity" with no medical justification. Hibakusha children and their parents did not share this impression.

This leads us to another important issue in medical discourses on hibakusha. How did medical experts respond to and label hibakushas' anxieties about their health and that of their children? All too frequently, these were imputed to a "neurotic" preoccupation with the bomb, to an "unhealthy" obsession that created problems where they did not exist. Hiroshima physicians even coined a new expression for this, "A-bomb neurosis" (*genbaku-noirooze*). Believed to have close parallels with hypochondriasis, phobias, and sometimes psychosis, the term, as described by Robert Lifton, indicates "a lifelong preoccupation with 'A-bomb disease'—with blood counts and bodily complaints, particularly that of weakness, to the extent of greatly restricting their lives or even becoming bedridden."[47] Lifton

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argues that "A-bomb neurosis" is an integral part of an "atomic bomb mythology which attributes all death to radiation effects," adding that hibakusha "resist clarification" on the issue of such effects.

Such concepts seem to be embraced by many Japanese physicians, even if they are not expressed explicitly; "A-bomb neurosis" has become a set expression to designate hibakushas' anxieties and supposed tendency to "blame everything" on the bomb. Incidentally, similarly "pathological behavior" has been observed among other radiation victims, including U.S. atomic veterans.[48]

Charges by the medical community that hibakusha were "neurotic" could only exacerbate the sense among victims that they had to give their suffering a "biological" basis in order to be taken seriously. As a result of this vicious circle, many hibakusha have grown increasingly frustrated and defensive with doctors. As Ôta wrote, "I know something is wrong with my body. I know my body better than any medical equipment. . . . The term 'A-bomb neurosis' is just a sly label for something doctors can't figure out."[49] She also recounts that she was diagnosed with severe anemia but that her doctors denied it had any link to the bomb; one ascribed it to her "unhealthy" writer's lifestyle, "writing at night and sleeping during the day." The author became so exasperated in her search to have her symptoms recognized as bomb-related that she came to envy women with keloids, who at least had "something to show for it."

Ôta's discomfort with the "psychologization" of her complaints is emblematic of that of my informants who feel that their illness experiences, including anxieties about their health and that of their offspring, are transformed by specialists into pathological "syndromes" to be overcome. Beneath such psychiatric categories seems to lurk the assumption that hibakushas' fears are irrational and counterproductive, and that to "get on" with their lives they "should" be able to forget their bodily anxieties.[50] In fact, the use of the term "neurosis" is highly questionable in connection with hibakusha. Ordinary neuroses spring from intrapsychic conflicts (believed to block accurate perception of reality) or suppressed impulses; none of this is

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applicable to hibakusha, whose anxieties are rooted in devastatingly "real" experiences of the bombing and radiation illnesses. Moreover, the focus on intrapsychic conflict confines the "pathology" to the individual, with suffering cut loose from the social and political context that reproduces it. In this, the psychiatric idiom is not necessarily more humane than the biomedical/scientific disourse used by ABCC researchers.

If doctors were ready to point out "neurotic" tendencies among their patients, medical care did not provide the therapeutic framework that would have allowed the patients to discuss their problems; consultations were limited to "purely medical" issues. The stigma associated with mental illness in Japan probably further discouraged many victims from seeking out professional aid; mental problems, often regarded as signs of "moral weakness," were supposed to be resolved by the individual alone or within the family, which in most cases meant that they remained unmentioned. It was only in extreme cases, when the victim became dysfunctional or was rejected by family members, that hibakusha were hospitalized in mental institutions, which provided mostly drugs rather than therapy. Recent reports have drawn attention to the serious problems in Japan's mental health-care system, including overcrowded wards, involuntary and extremely long hospitalizations, the lack of rehabilitation facilities, and rampant patient abuse.[51] It is obviously not in the hibakushas' interest to be classified and treated as a mental patient.

The basic problems in hibakusha health care—an exclusively medical orientation and the lack of appropriate counseling facilities—are reflected in the institutions that have been set up in the two A-bombed cities to deal specifically with hibakushas' medical needs. Until recently, the Hiroshima A-bomb hospital, and other hibakusha health centers, provided only medical treatment and free medical exams; hibakusha without "a real illness" had no one to turn to to discuss their problems or to cope with the trauma that could be caused by negative examination results. It was not until the 1980s that a group of medical social workers in Hiroshima began counseling hibakusha in Hiroshima hospitals; however, because of an endemic lack of personnel and facilities, few hibakusha can even take advan-

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tage of such counseling. An interview with the A-bomb hospital's sole social worker, who treats nonhibakusha as well, revealed that she is clearly overwhelmed by her caseload and feels frustrated with the fact that there are no psychiatrists at her hospital that specialize in hibakusha issues.

Today, it is undeniable that a great deal of money is being spent on health-care and diagnostic facilities for hibakusha, even if they are still considered inadequate by many hibakusha and their advocates. The Welfare Ministry's budget for these expenses totaled over 126 billion yen (about $870 million) in 1990; for 1995, it has risen above 145 billion yen (almost $1.5 billion). The municipal government spent the equivalent of $229 million in 1990.[52] However, the money is not necessarily well spent. For example, a luxurious home for the aged was built in the Hiroshima outskirts in 1992 at the cost of 5.5 billion yen, with funds from both the prefectural and municipal governments. It is well staffed and utilizes the newest equipment. Aside from the fact that this effort is seen as far from sufficient—the home has space for only three hundred, and there are thousands of aging hibakusha waiting—the very luxuriousness of the facilities has given rise to criticism among hibakusha that they are being "bought off" with money. One member of the Yamashita group said that the government uses the old people's home as a showcase: "See how well we are treating hibakusha!" Referring to the fact that the home is located at a considerable distance from the city center, the Osaka group compared it to the practice of "abandoning old women" (*obasute*), and as a way of "getting rid" of hibakusha.[53]

Such criticism reflects a pervasive sense among hibakusha that a medical approach, no matter how well funded, is insufficient for dealing with their problems if their social and psychological needs remain unrecognized. One example of this effect is provided by an aging hibakusha mother and her microcephalic daughter (exposed to radiation while in utero): given the daughter's total dependence upon her, the mother wanted to enter the old people's home with her and be treated as "one unit" (*hito-kumi*), but the city's bureaucratic provisions do not allow for this. To her, it is far more important to share a room

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with her daughter than to benefit from the newest, state-of-the-art equipment.

## EXPELLING POLITICS: BIOMEDICINE AS A "SOLUTION"

Government-sponsored medical responses to hibakusha must be placed in a larger social and political context, and particularly against the background of unresolved problems in the collective memory of the war. I have examined the political uses of medicine in conjunction with the ABCC, which is more closely identified with the United States, but medicine's "usefulness" to the political community is no less apparent in looking at the attitudes of the Japanese state.

As I noted, from 1945 to 1957 the government eschewed any acknowledgment of responsibility for hibakusha; in many ways, occupation policies, including censorship, were consistent with the Japanese government's vision of the war as a "great folly," brought to a merciful end by the bombs. As the emphasis shifted from reform to economic reconstruction, society's weakest members were left behind, and hibakusha became only one among other disadvantaged groups left out in Japan's plan to become a superpower.

If fears of "radiation contagion," propelled by powerful pollution beliefs, were widely shared, the difficulties and living conditions of hibakusha went ignored and undocumented. The country reveled in its spectacular rise from wartime ruins to ever-growing prosperity, an atmosphere that also spread to the two A-bombed cities: by the beginning of the 1950s, the cities had been entirely reconstructed, and hibakusha were a minority among the more vigorous newcomers. Expensive memorials were erected to commemorate those killed in the bombings, but victims struggling in the here and now were left to their own devices. It is noteworthy that many hibakusha worked as day laborers in this period, and a disproportionate number among them were women;[54] ironically, many were involved in the construction of Hiroshima's Peace Park, destined to become the "haut-lieu de mémoire" of the bomb and the epitome of the sanitized, ahistorical memory that has become dominant in the city.[55]

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In the mid-1950s, observers commented that the "reconstructed" Hiroshima, with its large avenues and extended parks, looked "more beautiful" than it had in its prebomb state. Clearly, such statements could not apply to hibakusha, whose failing bodies not only were recalcitrant reminders of the destruction but attested to the fact that the bombs continued to kill in a time of "peace and prosperity." Their bodies became a threat to the ideology of renewal, which sought to erase the past and to stigmatize any sign of deficiency as a "burden" to the healthy and vigorous. Such attitudes were also welcomed by Americans, who saw in Hiroshima's spectacular "rebirth" yet another sign of the bomb's harmlessness, even usefulness.

The situation—at least apparently—changed after the mid-1950s, with the escalation of the Cold War and growing public concern with radiation risks, particularly after the 1954 "Lucky Dragon" incident. The government began adopting an overtly "antinuclear" stance, insisting on its identity as the "sole A-bombed country" and non-nuclearized nation to emphasize its moral stature in a world of nuclear weapons. However, little of this nationalistic discourse had to do with a recognition and acknowledgment of hibakushas' difficulties; by then, the absence of medical aid had become a national embarrassment for a state that could well afford to provide this care. For the hibakusha relief laws, the government relied uncritically on the biomedical studies that were available and expressed little interest in investigating hibakushas' situation on its own; the first national survey of A-bomb victims was carried out only in 1965, and its results were largely statistical.

Today, victims are eligible for all kinds of allowances, dispensed according to the illness categories that they suffer from—the more serious the illness, the greater (at least theoretically) the amount the sufferers are entitled to. Aside from medical allowances, hibakusha are also eligible for other economic benefits, such as a "nursing allowance," a "health-management allowance," and even a "funeral allowance." Even if such benefits are very much needed by the most disenfranchised victims, this seems to be a way of "paying off" hibakusha. In its recent publications, the Health and Welfare Ministry has advertised its conviction that hibakusha are well taken care of,

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and that their medical and financial needs are being fully addressed by a government that is cognizant of and acting in an "antinuclear spirit."[56] This impression seems to be shared by many Japanese, who tend to feel that hibakusha get "special treatment" and are singled out for all kinds of benefits.

In reality, these allowances are surrounded by so much bureaucratic red tape that many victims are prevented from receiving or even applying for them; the most "generous" allowance, which provides a benefit of about $1000 a month for the duration of the treatment of the illness in question, currently goes to less than 1 percent of the hibakusha population; the majority of hibakusha receive a more modest benefit (the health-management allowance) of about $300 a month. The government is willing to spend money on individual hibakusha, but not that much.

Moreover, most of these allowances are subjected to an income limit, and thus amount to social-welfare provisions. Hibakusha are thus treated like welfare recipients, who are despised in Japanese society (less than 1 percent of the population in Japan is on welfare today). My informants tell me that they are often treated with considerable contempt by government officials when they apply for the provisions; they feel humiliated that they are forced to ask for "charity" (*omegumi*) under the present system. In effect, the law requires them to be both "sick" and "deficient" to fit into the medical and judicial categories of "institutionalized hibakushahood." It is not surprising that many of my informants refuse to apply for the benefits despite being eligible.

In fact, the medical/bureaucratic orientation of the relief laws provided a convenient solution to a moral and political dilemma: they allowed the government to "respond" to the existence of hibakusha while continuing to eschew a moral reflection on its historic responsibility for the war.[57] By transforming hibakushas' suffering into "just another disease," and thus the bomb into an event without actors, a medical approach serves to suppress the questions that are integral to a historically and politically informed understanding of the A-bomb experience. Moreover, a medical orientation perpetuates the false belief—albeit one that underlies the very concept of

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"hibakusha medical science"—that radiation can be effectively treated, even "cured," by modern medicine.

Significantly in this context, the relief laws deflect attention away from a fundamental moral issue, that of government compensation based on the principle of collective responsibility. Hibakusha groups have struggled for several decades for what they consider to be a "genuine relief law," based on state compensation and a public commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons; many of the Osaka group's publications deal with this problem. However, the government has consistently refused to pay compensation, claiming that "hibakusha should not be given special treatment." The U.S. government, on its part, considers that the issue of compensation for civilian war victims has been settled by the San Francisco Treaty. As a matter of policy, the Japanese state does not pay damages to war victims, in contrast to its treatment of former military personnel, who are entitled to generous compensations and pensions as well as benefits that dwarf those currently available for hibakusha.[58] This is suggestive with respect to the state's view on the war, which came into the open in a revealing 1980 report by the Health and Welfare Ministry: military personnel are "rewarded" for their service on behalf of the nation, while civilian war victims, including hibakusha, are asked to "endure."[59]

Yet—and this is where "medicine" plays the role of the deus ex machina—the state conceded in this report that hibakusha, unlike other war victims, suffer from "special medical conditions" due to "radiation damage," and that "relief measures" (*engo-taisaku*) should be taken to assist them; it is these "special medical conditions" that provide the official justification for the relief laws.[60] This implies that once hibakushas' medical and economic needs are "taken care of," the differences between them and other war victims are effectively canceled out, allowing the government to reestablish a "balance" between these groups and subsume both into a larger discourse of "collective war sacrifice." As one section in the report states, "In wartime, in extreme situations, when the very existence of the nation is at stake, it is inevitable that the population should be victimized, losing their lives, bodies or property; but the popu-

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lation should accept these losses, in the name of the 'general sacrifice' (*ippan no gisei*) that all citizens must pay. . . ."[61]

This legalistic discourse, which reveals the hypocrisy of the government's professed "antinuclear spirit," is no different from the American discourse that celebrates the bombs. In fact, both governments have reacted in very much the same way to compensation claims by radiation victims in their respective countries. When a group of Nevada residents who were contaminated by radioactive fallout from U.S. nuclear testing sued the government for damages in 1982, the government rejected their claims on the grounds that it is "immune to damage claims" when "doing research for the benefit of the public. . . ."[62] Survivors of the Chernobyl disaster and of fallout from Russian and French nuclear testing have been met with a similar abdication of responsibility when making claims for state-sponsored care and compensation. Clearly, the discourses on the bomb and radiation transcend national boundaries.

Today, the Osaka group considers compensation one of the most urgent issues to be addressed, especially in view of the aging of the hibakusha population; otherwise, they say, hibakushas' experiences will recede into oblivion, and their significance for this and future generations will be repressed. The disinterest of the Japanese (and foreign) media in this important issue is striking; A-bomb victim compensation was debated by the Murayama cabinet in 1994, but this debate went largely unnoticed.[63] This contrasts sharply with the international media coverage attracted by the problem of compensation and restitution for Holocaust victims—differential treatment that says much about the place of "Auschwitz" and "Hiroshima" in the collective memory, with the latter's "place in memory" being far more ambiguous.[64]

Even today, as the century draws to a close, we cannot seem to decide whether the A-bombings were "beneficial" or crimes against humanity. This, it would seem, is another important question that has become suppressed by the logic of "science" and "law." Yet it is a question to which women like Hayashi Kyôko and the resolute members of the Osaka and Yamashita groups tirelessly lead us back by presenting the bomb as it

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really is: a weapon of mass destruction, designed to injure and destroy human bodies, instantaneously and over time.

## CODA: "DUSTBINS FOR ETERNITY"?

In 1978, at the occasion of a diet session held in Tokyo on the "problem of medical relief for second-generation hibakusha," a municipal assemblyman said:

> I wonder whether there is not a way to wipe out hibakusha (*zetsumetsu no hôhô*). In view of the hereditary risks of "A-bomb disease," we should think about applying the Eugenics law, and the city should initiate policies to prevent hibakusha from bearing children. This would also be better from the point of view of government finances.[65]

The diet member's remarks caused quite a stir in the "A-bombed nation," but they epitomize two major themes in the responses to hibakusha that have emerged in this essay: the deployment of "science" to "wipe out" human beings and the application of "medical laws" to contain the human, as well as more down-to-earth financial, consequences of man-made actions. The politician's remarks are simply an honest expression of the mixture of denial, thinly veiled hostility, pragmatism, and hypocrisy that has characterized much of the collective reaction to hibakusha on both sides of the Pacific.

There is, however, a more general undercurrent in this statement, which cannot be easily dismissed: in the politician's eugenistic "fantasy of elimination," we can read the echoes of humanity's ancient dread for the "impure," something that becomes projected on hibakushas' irradiated bodies. This fantasy could stand for our own wishful thinking that the forces unleashed by radiation can be "domesticated" and that this "modern impurity," created through our own making, can be expelled or controlled by technical or scientific means. This holds true for both the military and civil uses of the atom. Yet even if the risk of nuclear war has receded (or so we are told), the atom is here to stay. We know that radioactive substances have life spans that dwarf our very concept of time; they can only be buried as nuclear waste, with hopes that the monster

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might never emerge in our lifetime. Françoise Zonabend, in her anthropological study of a nuclear waste–disposal plant in France's La Hague, characterizes radioactivity as "a waste that will never be eliminated, a lethal substance that will last forever: in sum, an eternal impurity (*une souillure éternelle*)."[66] Hibakusha have also become the wastebins of our collective imagination; they and their children carry "radioactive pollution," and the specter of wholesale devastation that it conjures, on behalf of all of us.

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ENDNOTES

[1]The term "hibakusha" includes people who were in the two cities at the time of the bombings, those who were contaminated by radioactive fallout in the days following the explosion, and people affected in utero. There are about 350,000 officially registered hibakusha in Japan today, and they include foreign nationals (especially Koreans). Today, the same term (though written differently in Japanese characters) is applied increasingly to other radiation victims and survivors of nuclear fallout or power-plant accidents all over the world. It is in the same spirit that I use the term as it is, without italics.

[2]Among the most serious after-effects are cancers, blood disorders including leukemia, and eye cataracts. A large group of "divergent conditions" are attributed to ionizing radiation, including keloids (hypertrophic burn scars), anemia, liver diseases, endocrine and skin disorders, impairment of central nervous system function, and general weakness. For a detailed summary of the bomb's physical effects, see Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (henceforth, Committee), *Hiroshima and Nagasaki—The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*, trans. Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 105–334.

[3]Henry Vyner's study of "atomic veterans," for example, bears out many similarities in psychological responses between U.S. and Japanese radiation victims. "The Psychological Effects of Ionizing Radiation," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 7 (3) (1983).

[4]Burakumin are associated with trades that have an intimate relationship with the pollution of blood and death, such as butchery, tanning, and the disposal of corpses.

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[5]Cf. the *Dædalus* issue on "Social Suffering" 125 (1) (Winter 1996), which presents recent scholarly work on contemporary experiences and appropriations of suffering in a variety of cultural contexts.

[6]Hayashi is one of the most prolific hibakusha authors today. She has produced several autobiographical collections centering on the experiences of hibakusha women. The Osaka group, founded by three women in 1967, is currently one of the most active self-help groups in Japan. It not only publishes members' experiences but also is involved in advocacy and counseling on behalf of hibakusha. The Yamashita group, also founded in 1967, has published a series of booklets in which members tell of the bomb's impact on their daily lives and also level a larger critique against Japanese society: *Asa* (Morning) (1967–1985: privately published).

[7]See Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki,* 503–504.

[8]See Wilfred Burchett, *Shadows of Hiroshima* (London: Verso, 1983), 19–20.

[9]See Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki,* 509, and Averill A. Liebow, *Encounter with Disaster: A Medical Diary of Hiroshima, 1945* (New York: Norton, 1985).

[10]For analyses of censorship, see Monica Braw, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed* (New York: Sharpe, 1990) and Jay Rubin, "La bombe 'outil de paix,'" in Maya Todeschini, ed., *Hiroshima 50 ans: Japon-Amérique, mémoires au nucléaire* (Paris: Autrement, 1995).

[11]*City of Corpses* (Shikabane no machi, 1948), trans. and presented by Richard H. Minear, *Hiroshima: Three Witnesses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[12]Hayashi Kyôko, "Naki ga gotoki" (As Though Nothing, 1980), in Kaku-sensô no kiken o uttaeru bungakusha no seimei no shômeisha, eds., *Nihon no genbaku bungaku* (Japanese A-bomb Literature) (Tokyo: Horupu Shuppan, 1983), vol. 3, 367.

[13]In one study on pregnant women exposed within 2,000 meters of the hypocenter, nearly 25 percent of the fetuses were stillborn, 26 percent died at birth or shortly thereafter, and 25 percent exhibited mental retardation. Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 218–219.

[14]Ibid., 156, 219.

[15]"Shôwa nijûnen no natsu" (Summer 1945), in Kaku-sensô no kiken o uttaeru bungakusha no seimei no shômeisha, *Nihon no genbaku bungaku*, vol. 3, 258–276, and *Naki ga gotoki*, 291.

[16]Hayashi, *Naki ga gotoki*, 339.

[17]For discussions of pollution beliefs in connection with illness, see Emiko Namihira, "Pollution in the Folk Belief System," *Current Anthropology* 28 (4) (1987): 65–74; Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Margaret Lock, *East Asian Medicine in Urban Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

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[18]Françoise Héritier argues that sterility and other disorders of reproductive function are almost universally attributed to women. "Stérilité, aridité, sécheresse," in Marc Augé and Claudine Herzlich, eds., *Le Sens du mal, Anthropologie, histoire, sociologie de la malaide* (Paris: Editions des Archives Contemporaines, 1984), 129–133.

[19]Mitsuharu Inoue, "The House of Hands," in Kenzaburo Oe, ed., *The Crazy Iris and Other Stories of the Atomic Aftermath* (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 145.

[20]Kamisaka Fuyuko, *Amami no genbaku otome* (The A-bomb Maidens of Amami) (Tokyo: Chûôkôron, 1987), focuses on a group of keloid-scarred young women, natives from a small rural community on Amami Island, who are excluded by villagers who feared that their keloids could be transmitted by airborne infection.

[21]For an examination of depictions in film of leukemic female hibakusha, see Maya Todeschini, "Death and the Maiden: Female Hibakusha as Cultural Heroines, and the Politics of A-bomb Memory," in Mick Broderick, ed., *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996).

[22]The 1993 statistics reveal that a third of all female hibakusha applied for medical aid with complaints of blood disorders, compared to 10 percent of male hibakusha.

[23]Cf. Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 293–296, and Hôshasen-hibakusha-iryô-kokusai-kyôryoku-suishin-kyôgikai, ed., *Genbaku-hôshasen no jintai-eikyô* (A-bomb Radiation Effects on the Human Body) (Tokyo: Igaku-shoshû-shuppansha, 1992).

[24]Hayashi, *Naki ga gotoki*, 145.

[25]Studies focused on spermatogenesis, menstrual function, and disorders of pregnancy and childbirth. In all cases, reproductive functions, both male and female, were found to have been at least temporarily disturbed. See Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 151–156.

[26]"Procession on a Cloudy Day," trans. Kashiwagi Hirosuke, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 25 (1) (1993): 61.

[27]Cf. Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 212–214.

[28]The ABCC was established by presidential directives, placed under the direction of the National Academy of Sciences, and supported by funds from the Armed Forces and the Atomic Energy Commission. The RERF is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare.

[29]See M. Susan Lindee, *Suffering Made Real: American Science and the Survivors of Hiroshima* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 122.

[30]RERF, *Radiation Effects Research Foundation: A Brief Description* (Hiroshima: RERF, 1991).

[31]Matsuzaka Yoshimasa, "ABCC ni kansuru kenkyû-nôto" (Research Notes on the ABCC), *Hiroshima igaku* 35 (4) (1982): 551.

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[32]See, especially, Nakagawa Yasuo, "Hiroshima-Nagasaki no genbaku hôshasen eikyô kenkyû: Kyûseishi, kyûsei-shôgai no kashô-hyôka" (A Historical Reexamination of the Investigations into Atomic Radiation Effects in Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Underestimation of Acute Radiation Effects, Including Acute Radiation Death), *Kagakushi-kenyû* 25 (1986): 20–34; and Sugihara Yasuo, "ABCC mondai ni tsuite" (On the Problem of the ABCC), *Nihon no kagakusha* 2 (3) (1967): 232.

[33]Nakagawa Yasuo, "Hiroshima-Nagasaki no genbaku hôshasen eikyô kenkyû: Kyûseishi, kyûsei-shôgai no kashô-hyôka," 131.

[34]For example, researchers chose to focus only on mutations believed to be "threatening for the future survival of the species," and thus investigated certain indicators (such as sex ratio, lower birth weight or retarded growth, and higher rates of malformation, stillbirth, and neonatal death) while rejecting others (such as reduced fertility or sterility, early spontaneous abortion, and minor malformations). Lindee, *Suffering Made Real*, 178–179, 223, 228.

[35]Cf. Frank Barnaby, "The Continuing Body Count at Hiroshima and Nagasaki," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (December 1977).

[36]Mortality from leukemia peaked between 1950 and 1954; for those exposed to high doses of radiation, it was more than thirty times higher compared with those who were not exposed. The incidence of leukemia declined steadily afterwards but remained seven times higher between 1965 and 1971. See Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 240, 255–261.

[37]Hayashi, *Naki ga gotoki*, 366.

[38]See Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfillment* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), 175–185.

[39]George M. Naglehurst, "An Appraisal of Atomic Bomb Stress and Its Possible Relationship to Present Health and Longevity of People Exposed in Hiroshima Ten Years Ago," 1955, unpublished report, courtesy of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial Collection, Wilmington College, Ohio.

[40]Lindee, *Suffering Made Real*, 257. The same point is made in Hugh Gusterson's study of nuclear weapons scientists, *Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[41]Hayashi, *Naki ga gotoki*, 316.

[42]Quoted in "50 Years Later, Scope of A-bombs' Horror is Unclear," *International Herald Tribune*, 7 August 1995.

[43]Elliot Marshall, "Study Casts Doubt on Hiroshima Data," *Science* 258 (16 October 1992): 394.

[44]Hayashi, "No ni" (In the Field), *Gyaman Biidoro* (Cut Glass, 1978), in Kaku-sensô no kiken o uttaeru bungakusha no seimei no shômeisha, *Nihon no genbaku bungaku*, vol. 3, 243.

[45]"Watashi no genbaku-shô" (My A-bomb Disease, 1955), in Kaku-sensô no kiken o uttaeru bungakusha no seimei no shômeisha, *Nihon no genbaku bungaku*, vol. 2, 305.

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[46]See Margaret Lock, "Protests of a Good Wife and Wise Mother: The Medicalization of Distress in Japan," in E. Norbeck and M. Lock, eds., *Health, Illness, and Medical Care in Japan: Cultural and Social Dimensions* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987).

[47]Robert Jay Lifton, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 119.

[48]Henry Vyner argues that U.S. atomic veterans suffer from a pathological disorder due to their anxieties about radiation effects, the "Radiation Response Syndrome" (RRS). He notes the similarities between RRS and "A-bomb Neurosis." Vyner, "The Psychological Effects of Ionizing Radiation."

[49]Ôta, "Watashi no genbaku-shô," 305–306.

[50]Cf. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "Suffering and Its Professional Transformation," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 15 (3) (1991): 275–301.

[51]Cf. Stephan Salzberg, "In a Dark Corner: Care for the Mentally Ill in Japan," *Social Science in Japan* (2) (1994).

[52]Kôseishô-hoken-iryô-kyoku-kikaku-ka (Welfare Ministry Health Protection Section), *Atarashii hibakusha engo-hô no pointo* (The Important Points in the New Hibakusha Relief Law) (Tokyo: Gyôsei, 1995), 38. This amount includes medical and economic benefits for hibakusha.

[53]This refers to an old custom in some poor mountain villages where old people were apparently left to die by the villagers. The well-known movie *Ballads of Narayama* fictionalizes this theme.

[54]Committee, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, 428, 458.

[55]For an anthropological analysis of the politics of memory in Hiroshima, see Lisa Yoneyama, "Taming the Memoryscape: Hiroshima's Urban Renewal," in J. Boyarin, ed., *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Time/Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[56]Kôseishô-hoken-iryô-kyoku-kikaku-ka, *Atarashii hibakusha engo-hô no pointo*.

[57]Cf. Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994).

[58]Cf. Nihon-gensuibaku-higaisha-dantai-kyôgikai (Hidankyô: Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers), *Hibakusha engo-hô: 20-mon, 20-tô* (The Hibakusha Relief Law: 20 Questions, 20 Answers), Tokyo, 1992.

[59]For a summary and critique of the report, see Ishida Chû, *Genbaku to ningen: Engo-hô to wa nani ka* (The A-bomb and Human Beings: The Meaning of the Relief Law) (Tokyo: Kikanshi-rengô-tsûshinsha, 1983), 22–26.

[60]Kôseishô-hoken-iryô-kyoku-kikaku-ka, *Atarashii engo-hô no pointo*, 1.

[61]Quoted in Ishida, *Genbaku to ningen*, 23.

[62]Cf. "Nevada's Nuclear Legacy," *Boston Globe*, 26 February 1989.

[63]Cf. "Atomic bomb victim bill touted," *Asahi Evening News*, 29 August 1994.

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[64]For comparative analyses of Hiroshima and Auschwitz, see Richard H. Minear, "Holocauste atomique, holocauste nazi," and Alain Brossat, "Epilogue: Si loin, si près, Hiroshima et Auschwitz," in Todeschini ed., *Hiroshima 50 ans*, 147–159, 217–233.

[65]*Mainichi shinbun*, 2 July 1978.

[66]Françoise Zonabend, *La presqu'île au nucléaire* (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 1989), 185.

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*Serenella Sferza*

# What is Left of the Left? More Than One Would Think

## INTRODUCTION

Of the fifteen countries that make up the European Union, thirteen currently have a Left government. At no prior time has the Left enjoyed such power. Yet perhaps never before have its identity and purpose been so much in question. The issue is not that good reasons are lacking to explain the Left's success: high unemployment rates and rising insecurity and inequalities are plausible enough grounds for trashing governing parties and voting Left. The problem, rather, is that there are increasing reasons for believing that doing so does not make a difference.

In most European countries, the social, organizational, and policy criteria by which we used to identify the Left are in tatters. The working class is both shrinking *and* deserting the Left. At the most recent French presidential election, the candidate who attracted the largest working-class vote at the first ballot was neither a Communist nor a Socialist, but the extreme right-wing politician Jean-Marie Le Pen. Everywhere, albeit at a different rate, trade unions are losing members and, even more importantly, lack the moral authority to speak for the general interest. Whereas once solid institutional ties with organized labor were a necessary condition of Left strength, they have now come to be seen as severe handicaps that Left parties are seeking to minimize. In Britain, "New" Labour has largely rebuilt its image and its electoral strength by breaking free from

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its close ideological and organizational ties with the unions. Left parties that prided themselves on their class-mass character have turned into flimsier, leadership-centered, electoral organizations that strive for a "catchall" appeal. In Italy, for example, state "moralization" and economic normalization have been two of the major reasons for the Left's recent victory. New alliances, best illustrated by Red–Green governments that have emerged in various European countries, including Germany and France, have further blurred both the Left's image and agenda. Last, but not least, the instruments on which the Left has historically relied to promote growth and equality, from welfare and social policies to macroeconomic stimulation, have become unaffordable or unviable for a variety of reasons, ranging from population aging to global competition and regional integration. The last government of the Left that seriously tried to use these instruments fully—the Mauroy government in 1981 France—was compelled to beat a hasty retreat. It taught its successors and other European Left parties a major lesson in moderation that has not yet been forgotten.

These changes, it is often suggested, have not only transformed the Left but emptied it of its substance. Ironically, this hollowing is also seen as a major factor in the Left's recent comeback. The Left parties that are today doing the best are those that have most effectively distanced themselves from their sectoral working-class appeal and have embraced "New Politics" issues and groups. They have put their fate in the hands of young and often charismatic leaders with both a strong personal and mass-media appeal, and have consented to the "marketization" of their economies and societies.[1] Thus, New Labour that claims to have entered on a new course—a so-called Third Way that will increase efficiency and equity while avoiding state and market domination—is practically sailing through its mandate. By contrast, the German Social Democrats, who, despite their search for a "New Middle," still resemble a classic northern Social Democracy, are off to a much rockier start.[2] And the Left is discovering that, independently of what it intends to do, there is little it can do. The recent resignation of Oskar Lafontaine—one of the most vocal spokesman of old-style Keynesian measures and redistributive

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policies—from his post as Germany's finance minister illustrates the point.[3] As one major historical study of the European Left has concluded, the *fin de siècle* Left has become unprecedentedly homogenous and modest.[4]

To the question of how much is left of the Left, then, the answer seems to be, not much.[5] From such a perspective, the Left's massive comeback has little practical meaning or significance, other than as a sign of widespread disappointment with tightening international constraints and slow economic growth. At best, Left governments will bring a fuller understanding and legitimation of market values and rules, a younger and less stuffy leadership, and a greater openness to postmaterialist concerns; at worst, they will slow Europe's adaptation to global competition and unification.

In this essay I take a very different position. There is more left of the Left than is usually suggested, for at least two reasons. First, the record of the contemporary Left on the redistributive agenda with which it has been historically identified is not as bad as some make it out to be. A new wave of scholarly research shows that traditional Left constituencies, issues, and objectives remain important in contemporary societies and in the programs of most Left parties, and that governments of the Left have found new ways to pursue their old egalitarian goals. Whereas the Left may lack a grand project, an argument can still be made that the glass remains half full.[6]

Even more importantly, what we think is left of the Left depends on how we look at it. Dominant views of the Left, past and present, are distorted in part because they include only one of its faces—the economic one—while leaving out any account of its other equally important face, the political one. When we take both the economic and political faces into consideration, developments that appear to signal the unmooring of the Left from its historical legacy suggest instead a significant shift in emphasis between the two components of its legacy.

From its beginning, the Left has been as concerned with issues of political equality as with socioeconomic ones. At the time when Socialist parties were formed, most European countries were dealing with a set of highly contentious issues centering around the location of power, the access to political rights,

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and the constitutional form of the state. These battles pitted advocates of universal suffrage and parliamentary regimes against supporters of limited voting and executive-centered regimes; they laid the foundations of what I have chosen to term the "authoritarianism/democracy" cleavage.[7] Over time, the expression, focus, and constituency of this cleavage have changed, as this primordial conflict has spilled over to other issues involving the location of, and access to, political power.

The authoritarianism/democracy cleavage enduringly shaped the ideology and organization of Left parties. In countries where the battles between supporters of authoritarianism and democracy were most salient—competitive and prolonged—as in France and other Southern European countries, Socialist parties from their inception tended to be "citizens'" parties with relatively universalist ideologies and explicitly open organizations. By contrast, in countries where the authoritarianism/democracy cleavage was salient but where Socialists did not face great competition in representing the democratic pole, as in Germany, or where the authoritarianism/democracy conflict had been largely resolved by bourgeois parties prior to the formation of a Socialist party, as in Britain, Left parties displayed the materialist ideology, the tightly knit subculture, and the mass organization associated with workers' parties. As a result, the "political" face of the Left was differentially incorporated into the repertoires of the various Left parties—most prominent in the citizens' parties, and much less so in the workers' parties.

If we take into account both faces of the Left, a new interpretation of recent Left trends becomes possible. The programmatic shifts that many Left parties are undergoing today, which are often seen as major departures from their historical legacy, may indeed be signs that the Left's genetic stock is running thin. However, an alternative and equally plausible interpretation is that they represent the sometimes divergent, sometimes convergent efforts by different strands of the Left to revitalize and incorporate, each in its own way, those aspects of the Left's heritage that for reasons having to do with the country-specific historical circumstances of party formation were weaker in their genetic pool. This "borrowing" may well lead to the

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revitalization of the Left rather than to its demise. The question, then, becomes whether and how the democratic and egalitarian faces of the Left can be combined, and how parties that never fully incorporated both traditions can do so now.

My purpose is to provide some support for the perspective I have outlined, discussing the specific case of the French Socialist Party since the Left's legislative victory of 1997 and the formation of a Socialist-led government in its aftermath. A major Left "winner" of recent years, the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) epitomizes the broader Left's trajectory from radicalism and grand projects to moderation and conformism. At the same time, the French Socialist Party is a citizens' party that historically has never been successful in pursuing the traditional economic and social goals of the Left. On both counts, it provides an ideal observation point for analyzing what is left of the Left.

## A CITIZENS' PARTY: THE FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY

The French Socialist Party has long intrigued analysts and commentators, first as a historical underachiever that never lived up to its promise, and, since the 1970s, for its remarkable success and unexpected resilience.[8] At a time in which many of its European counterparts were on the defensive, the PS staged a phoenix-like comeback that brought it to power in 1981 amidst widespread expectations that its victory would "change life." Since then, the PS was more or less uninterruptedly in power until 1993, and again from 1997 to the present. In these years, the PS has weathered many changes, but its moral and policy failures—notably its inability to prevent unemployment from rising—have been conspicuous. Initially viewed as a test of whether radicalism could work, the Socialists' first years in power came to taken as conclusive proof that it could not. As a result, the French Socialists took the lead in moving towards a broader process of Left modernization and marketization.

In the aftermath of its brutal defeat of 1993, the PS retreated partially from its newly found economic orthodoxy. The cause of Left modernization found new pioneers in Britain and Italy, and the French Left attracted more notice for what it said about

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the peculiarities of French politics than for what it said about the European Left.

The Socialists' 1997 victory, so unexpected, attracted little attention mostly because it seemed to provide further proof that Left victories had no significant policy implications. Indeed, the Left's victory was dismissed as a victory by default, in the sense that it was thought to be the by-product of President Jacques Chirac's ill-fated decision to call for unanticipated elections. Chirac hoped to force his right-wing majority to fall into line behind his prime minister and the austerity measures both favored. The electorate had voted against an extremely unpopular prime minister much more than it had voted for the Left. Whatever the voters' reasons, the Left government was said to be confronted with such tight international constraints that it would practically have no policy choices. The Left would be required to finish the dirty job, reluctantly begun by the Right, of bringing France's public deficit within the limits of the Maastricht Treaty. In these circumstances, the outcome would be the same. On most issues, the so-called Plural Left, which defined the new government, was thought to be too diverse to agree on anything. With expected help from Chirac, the composite mixture of Socialists, Communists, Greens, *Citoyens*, and Radicals (all members of the Jospin government) was expected to implode at the first misstep. That, many assumed, would not be long in coming.

What is more, the Socialists' key electoral pledge (more jobs), the proposed methods (statism), and even their leadership were all taken as signs that the French Left had fallen out of step with the modernization of the European Left. Lionel Jospin—the architect of the Left's comeback and the new prime minister—was a lifetime Left activist who lacked the charismatic brilliance, congeniality, and media appeal of certain of his counterparts, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder, for example, or the "novelty" appeal of a boundary crosser like Romano Prodi. He was most often portrayed as a second-rate leader, a somewhat parochial French bureaucrat.[9] Even worse, Jospin remains committed to the old notions of Left and Right. After Tony Blair announced to the French National Assembly that "there is not an economic policy of the Left and an economic policy of the

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Right, but only a good and a bad policy," Jospin hastened to correct him by noting that "things are more complicated. . . . There are good Left policies and bad Left policies, and good Right policies and bad Right policies."[10] The comparison between an "archaic" Left—Jospin's—and a "modern" Left—Blair's—was the overriding theme of commentary on the state of the European Left until the German Social Democrats began to steal the French role.

Yet the best way to understand the record, both past and present, of the French Socialists is to look at them not as being "ahead" or "behind" other Lefts but as an exemplar of what I have termed a citizens' party. More universalist than class-oriented, more focused on political issues having to do with the democratization of power than on social or economic questions, and rather loosely and democratically organized, the French Socialist Party has fared better on democratic than on labor issues. At the same time, its success has been contingent on the pursuit of an inclusive and social view of citizenship.

## THE CONSTITUENCY

One of the reasons why so little is said to remain of the Left has to do with the disappearance of the old traditional cleavages, together with the shrinking of the Left's working-class constituency. These developments are said to have produced a volatile and competitive market in which major parties are able to win only by presenting bland programs that appeal to centrist voters, in which electoral victories have no programmatic content.

Whether this analysis applies to the French case is certainly questionable. In the mid 1990s, the Socialist electorate was better educated, more wealthy, and enjoyed greater job security than in the Mitterrand years. Support for the Socialists had declined among blue-collar workers but had increased substantially among public-sector employees and *cadres*. Still, this electorate maintained a distinct sociological and ideological profile. Left voters attributed their vote to values and issues—"society, morality, equality"—entirely different from those of Right voters—"liberal, market, national tradition, immigration."[11] Especially among younger voters the foundations of the

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Left/Right divide had shifted, with new issues, notably a universalistic acceptance of immigrants and Europe, displacing the old ones, such as support for nationalization and secularism.[12] These had become the new defining elements of socialism. When viewed against the rising support for the National Front and the xenophobia that accompanied it these values could scarcely be thought bland, uncontested, or extraneous to the Left's historical legacy.

Similarly, France's electoral landscape only very superficially resembled the volatile, centrist-leaning market often seen as a major cause of the Left's ideological obliteration. Clearly, economic and cultural transformations, the creation of the *Front National*, the *Verts*, and other new parties, and the appearance of such new issues as unemployment, immigration, and European unification cut across partisan blocs. The neutralization of others, including nationalization, which had once seemed so crucial, undermined the structural and ideological bases of old-style partisanship. French voters had begun to question the traditional notions of Left and Right, and, as illustrated by the repeated alternation between Left and Right, some of them were willing to travel unprecedented distances along the political spectrum, trespassing what had once been a clearly drawn Left/Right divide.[13] Still, a majority of the French view the political landscape as divided between these old blocs and readily place themselves and their candidates in one or other of the two camps. They tend to vote in keeping with this self-placement.[14] Accordingly, mobility between blocs is quite low: over the last three elections only 10 percent of the electorate has crossed the Left/Right divide, primarily to the advantage of the National Front. The center, by contrast, remains very small; the number of French voters who place themselves in the middle of the political spectrum has in fact decreased in the past thirty years.[15]

In short, whereas the French political landscape has certainly changed, it still hardly resembles a true "market." Further, the motivations and concerns of the Socialist electorate appear to be more consistent with the egalitarian, inclusionary legacy and society-centered preoccupations of a citizens' party than with the consensual, individual-centered appeal of a catchall party.

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THE PROGRAM

A "demand" for Left policies does not necessarily imply a Left "offer"; in 1997, however, the two appeared to coincide. Jospin's campaign emphasized three themes: job creation, the restoration of the Republican pact between citizens and the state, and the preservation of national sovereignty as an instrument of social citizenship. These wove democratic and social issues into a distinctive Left package.

Jospin's major promise was to reduce unemployment—a goal that had eluded both Left and Right governments since the late 1970s. In keeping with the Left tradition, this goal was to be achieved through two state sponsored measures—the creation of seven hundred thousand five-year nonrenewable youth jobs in the so-called social sector and the shortening of the workweek to thirty-five hours (so that by working less, more people would work). Both measures were criticized as more or less malignant, equally ineffective examples of the Left's disdain for economic constraints. Other European Lefts questioned openly the likely impact of the shorter week on job creation. They objected to the method through which it was to be introduced—legislation rather than concertation. Some viewed it as an obstacle to industrial competitiveness.[16] Gerhard Schröder dismissed the thirty-five-hour proposal as the French Left's "great present to German industry"; French industrialists announced their strenuous opposition to any legislative reform on the matter; and President Chirac spoke of it as "hazardous."[17]

These controversial measures clearly signaled Jospin's determination to make jobs his number one priority and, in so doing, to engage his own credibility and imagination for a cause that most other politicians viewed as lost. Throughout the campaign, these measures became Jospin's best and constantly reiterated selling points. The thirty-five-hour workweek was seen as distinctively Left.

The restoration of the Republican pact between the state and the people was Jospin's second major campaign theme. While that promise has been common among French politicians, Jospin gave it a distinctive Left twist by emphasizing the democratic character and inclusive scope of the Republican pact and the

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centrality of the state as the guardian both of universalism and equality. In keeping with this view, Jospin promised to privatize only when it was strategically beneficial to the specific industry, and to do so under close state supervision. Public ownership of all basic services would be maintained in areas as different as transportation, education, and electricity. The financing and pricing of these services would be fixed at rates that would make them more truly universally accessible.[18] Power was to be made more transparent, accountable, and widely distributed. This would be accomplished through a change in leadership style and a variety of political reforms, which ranged from noninterference in judicial matters to severe limitations on the number of offices politicians could hold. Promises were made to enforce "gender parity" in political office. Most controversially, Jospin pledged to restore the state to its universalist obligations by returning to the principle of *jus soli* as the sole condition of citizenship. New forms of immigration control, which would respect the immigrants' individual rights, were pledged.[19]

Some of these promises were designed to exploit Jospin's reputation as an unbending man who spoke his mind, kept his word, and remained untouched by scandals despite his past close proximity to power. In so doing, Jospin intended to distance himself from both Mitterrand's Florentine style and Juppé's technocratic absolutism. Still, his emphasis on universalism and egalitarianism, and his reliance on the state as the protector of both, clearly placed him within the political tradition of the French Left. Interestingly, these roots also inspired Jospin's riskiest electoral bet: the return to *jus soli* as the only source of citizenship compatible with French tradition. Considering Le Pen's success in imposing his view of immigration as a threat to economic security and national identity and the strong anti-immigrant feelings of the popular electorate, Jospin's decision to enter the fray and reframe the debate on citizenship and immigration in terms of universal obligations and social issues was a courageous one.[20]

Jospin's third theme, the pledge to defend national sovereignty and the social rights that went with it against the threats posed by globalization and European unification, played a rela-

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tively minor role in the campaign. Jospin suggested that a Left government might reconsider France's commitments if the EMU's stabilization pact conflicted with its priorities. Such a promise resonated with a substantial component of the popular electorate for whom European unification had become synonymous with austerity, and, together with immigration, was a major cause of xenophobia.[21] Because of France's treaty engagements and the president's traditional primacy on international matters, but also because of significant differences within the plural Left on this issue, Europe remained very much on the back burner.

## THE POLICIES

The most powerful argument for the demise of the Left is that the policies with which it has been traditionally associated no longer work. In this respect, the Jospin government was thought to be doomed: its commitments were unrealistic, since its internal diversity would block their implementation.

Twenty months into its mandate, the Jospin government has gained considerable weight and credibility. First, the government survives. Contrary to what has happened in Germany, where intense conflicts within, and between, the SPD and the Greens have caused the Left government much grief, the more internally diversified French Left, while discussing and disagreeing on a variety of issues, has done so in a relatively collegial way, without paralyzing the government.[22] Surprisingly, even the PS—a legendarily fractious party—has stood behind Jospin.[23] Further, the government has been relatively unaffected by two other causes of instability—street protest and presidential whims. *Cohabitation* has made it impossible for the president to dismiss a popular prime minister. Social and protest movements have been deflated by the Left victory and by the government's skillful use of legislation to take the wind out of street demonstrations.

The government is also quite popular. In January 1999, nearly two thirds of the French approved of Jospin's actions; key ministers enjoyed a more positive image than the principal right-wing leaders; and confidence in the Left stood at a level

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unknown since the early 1980s—twenty-one points higher than in the parties of the Right.[24] The local elections of March 1998 showed that approval for the government translated into support for its political components, and especially for the PS.[25] The European elections of June 1999 are expected to confirm this trend.

Finally, the government has stuck to its agenda. Much of the promised legislation, and notably some of its most controversial measures, have been approved. As part of a broader effort to recast immigration-related issues as social rather than as security or identity issues and to reframe the question of national identity in universalistic Republican terms, the government has passed new laws on citizenship and immigration. The outcome has been a compromise between the Left's principled universalism and its determination not to alienate its working-class constituents. On immigration, the government has realistically acknowledged that the influx of new immigrants cannot be stopped but that it does cause insecurity, especially among low-income groups. Hence it needs to be tightly regulated according to the national interest, although in ways that show respect for individual rights.[26] On citizenship, sons and daughters of foreign parents born and living in France are once again given automatic access to French nationality, but only at the age of eighteen.

Both reforms proved to be divisive. No agreement could be reached with the Right and, in the end, most Communist and Green deputies abstained on the new nationality code because it failed to grant citizenship at birth.[27] Further, undocumented immigrants, backed by a wide array of religious, humanitarian, green, and union associations, as well as prominent left-wing intellectuals, staged a number of highly dramatic protests in the hope of obtaining legal immigrant status. The Left split between principled hard-liners, who did not want to set a wrong precedent, and humanitarians, who sympathized with the immigrants' plight—with Jospin walking a tightrope between them.[28]

Still, by seizing the initiative, the government has effectively challenged the National Front's monopoly on nationality and immigration issues, greatly reducing its influence. A majority of French approved of the new laws, and, in a highly symbolic

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victory, a Socialist won the National Front's single legislative seat.[29] The fact that political analysts, commenting upon the new laws a year after their approval, wondered why such moderate measures had seemed to be so divisive, is further evidence of the government's progress in changing both the terms and the tone of the debate.

On the employment issue, the government has passed the two measures Jospin had promised. The Aubry law, named after Martine Aubry, the Employment and Solidarity Minister, has proposed the creation of seven hundred thousand minimum-wage and largely state-financed jobs, half in the private sector and half in the public. Reserved for youths who have never worked long enough to qualify for unemployment, these jobs consist of five-year nonrenewable contracts, which seek to "marry social demand and labor supply" by addressing needs not covered by the public or the private sector.[30] By May 1998, one hundred thousand jobs were identified and sixty thousand were filled in the public and voluntary sectors; the government was expecting to reach a total of 150,000 jobs by the end of the year.[31] By contrast, nothing seems to have happened in the private sector.

Whereas state-financed jobs, of whatever type, are relatively uncontroversial in France, the thirty-five-hour workweek has not proved to be so. The French public, while moderately supportive, was confronted by experts who could not agree about its overall effect on jobs or productivity. Trade unions worried about its impact on wages and work regulations; industrialists denounced its costs, maintaining that it would not create jobs.[32] By the fall of 1997, the thirty-five-hour workweek had become a major *casus belli* between the government and the various employers' associations. On learning that the government intended to go ahead as planned, the president of the CNPF—France' largest business association—resigned in protest; his successor portrayed his mission as "the killing of Jospin," and contacts between the *patronat* and the government were suspended for six months.

In this atmosphere, many expected that the thirty-five-hour proposal would join the long list of highly symbolic though unfulfilled promises of the French Left. In February 1998, when

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the government legislated that the thirty-five-hour workweek would start in January 2000 in firms with more than twenty workers and in 2002 in all firms, with the public sector being the sole exemption, the law surprised even the Left. And all the more so since its timely passage effectively took the unemployed off the streets, putting an end to a political mobilization that was beginning to harm the government's popularity.[33]

In addition to these state-centered efforts at job creation, the government has passed redistributive welfare and fiscal legislation—two areas on which Left and Right are supposed to diverge—which past Socialist governments left relatively untouched. In both areas, the government has adopted revenue and expenditure neutral reforms that redistribute resources to low-income groups.[34] Thus, the budget deficit—a major cause of the 1997 election—was brought within EMU limits by raising business and corporate taxes. The fiscalization of health-insurance contributions and the subordination of family allowances to income testing that effectively exclude the rich are further examples of policies that have shifted burdens and benefits in markedly redistributive ways at no extra budgetary cost.[35] Like other Left governments at times of fiscal restraint, the Jospin government has managed to turn "vice into virtue" by "targeting inequities within the welfare state that are simultaneously a source of inefficiency."[36]

Even on its supposedly weakest front, the international one, the Left government has something to show, including an agreement on the status of New Caledonia, which had long eluded its predecessors, and a certain number of achievements in Europe. Italy and Spain have been admitted to the EMU, as demanded by the French government, though not necessarily because of its influence. Europe now officially has a social dimension, and its members have agreed to undertake a major campaign against unemployment. Whereas some of these changes are purely symbolic, the Jospin government has managed to convey the impression that European integration is an interactive process with room for negotiation.[37]

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ASSESSMENT AND PROSPECTS

Few analysts would deny that the Jospin government has done much better than expected. The debate on the reasons for this success and whether it is likely to last continues. A popular argument emphasizes both luck and leadership. As opposed to his Left predecessors, Jospin won office on the eve of an unexpected economic upswing—not to mention France's World Cup victory—which gave his government much-needed breathing space. Whereas Chirac had felt compelled to call for early elections to secure support for the budget cuts required by Maastricht, the Left managed to meet the criteria for admission to the EMU in a seemingly effortless, redistributive way. With the economy growing at rates unknown in the past decade—from 2.3 percent in 1997 to 3 percent in 1998—Jospin was able to lower the deficit and please his voters. Spending on Left priorities, such as employment, education, and justice, were significantly increased. The disposable income of wage earners grew by 2.5 percent in 1998. Best of all, unemployment began to move slowly down, from 12.6 percent in June 1997 to 11.5 percent in January 1999—a small but significant change that brought the total number of unemployed under the highly symbolic figure of three million.[38]

A skilled political leadership got the best mileage out of its lucky start. Whether we look at the quality and size of the government, the maintenance of the Plural Left coalition, or the government's relationship with civil society, Jospin showed remarkable skills, an unsuspected capacity to market what has become known as the Jospin "method." Based on "diagnosis, dialogue, decision," this method derives from the simple assumption that listening and discussing do not in themselves undermine authority. The government has debated and disagreed about a variety of controversial issues, with Jospin acting as arbitrator. Whether on the matter of nuclear energy, privatization, citizenship, or family allowances, agreement has been reached.[39] The government's unusually small size, the absence in its ranks of Socialist notables, and the presence in key positions of men and women with a reputation for being honest, capable, and imaginative have contributed to this out-

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come. Moderation in claiming the political spoils that come with office, and the obligation for members of the government to forgo executive local office, have added substance and popularity to this style of decision making.[40]

Even when applied to the relationship between the government and various interest groups, associations, and spokesmen of the civil society—a terrain on which French governments have traditionally trod gingerly, alternating between a principled disdain for sectoral interests and a surrender to street protest—the Jospin "method" has worked well. While open to consultation, the government has yielded relatively little under pressure. This is best illustrated by its interaction with groups as diverse as the undocumented immigrants seeking regularization, the business associations who opposed the thirty-five-hour workweek, the prominent industrialists who sought to impose their own view of privatization, the unemployed demanding higher compensation, and, most recently, the teachers opposed to school reform.[41] As an anonymous commentator put it, France has found in Jospin, once again after Mitterrand, a leader who "does politics."[42] Even more, the unusual combination of accessibility and firmness with which the Jospin method is identified has earned its creator praise for being both democratic *and* effective.

Because French voters do eventually tire of their prime ministers and luck does not last forever, many are predicting that the government's best days are over. The recent high rating of Jacques Chirac suggests that Jospin's appeal may be weakening. The Asian economic crisis and the monetary disturbances in Latin America have already forced the government to lower its growth forecast for 1999.[43] More importantly, the government may have already cashed in most of the benefits its policies are going to produce. For very diverse reasons, the Aubry laws, the thirty-five-hour workweek, and Social Europe may in the end make very little difference. The government's firmness in dealing with business and in reshuffling taxes may actually discourage job creation. Finally, scandals surrounding certain key figures of the "Mitterrand years" may in time seriously undermine the credibility of the Jospin method.[44] Indeed, disillusionment is bound to be great when the government's

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early achievements have raised too-high expectations about its future prospects.

The thirty-five-hour workweek illustrates the uncertainty that still surrounds certain of the government's initiatives. The actual content of the reform depends on ongoing trade union–business negotiations, as well as on further legislation to be adopted in the fall. While its impact on jobs remains to be seen, economic experts have suggested that the legislation would create a substantial number of new jobs, but only if it is accompanied by wage moderation and more flexible work hours.[45] At the moment, this seems unlikely. Business continues to oppose the reform and has taken advantage of a divided and extremely weak union movement to negotiate agreements that violate its spirit.[46] The content of these agreements, in turn, has prompted the government to contemplate punitive measures against firms that counter the thirty-five hours with extended overtime. This has only strengthened the workers' opposition to wage moderation in exchange for jobs and has lowered public confidence in business and trade-union organizations.[47] In keeping with France's tradition, the fate of a reform whose viability hinges on flexibility and negotiation will in the end be decided by the state.[48]

My own assessment of the Jospin government, while not denying the importance of luck and leadership, suggests that Jospin's achievements can best be understood as elements in a broader picture. On several fronts, Jospin is reaping the reward of the Socialists' record as a citizens' party, a record confirmed and revitalized in the 1970s by the PS's commitment to *autogestion,* with the promise to democratize and equalize power across genders and sites.[49] Thus, for example, the relatively smooth integration of the Greens in the government, while eased by Jospin's understanding of coalition politics, is largely a by-product of substantial overlapping—in terms of organizational styles, culture, policies, and electorate—between these two parties. Similarly, the appeal of the Jospin "method" is certainly rooted in Jospin's personal qualities, but the search for a distinctive governmental practice is a longstanding theme of the French Left. French Socialists have always defined themselves in respect to the management of power as much as in that of the economy. This may well turn out to be a major and lasting strength of the Jospin government.[50]

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At the same time, the current Left government has displayed a remarkable determination to pursue traditional Left issues, from job creation to redistribution, which have never been the number one concern and guiding principle of Left governments in France. The instruments through which Jospin is pursuing this "new" agenda—top-down legislation and state-centered programs, combined with mild doses of Keynesianism—are typical of the French Left. As with other universal rights, the French Left is not yet willing to trust the market to provide jobs. Whether the state can command the solidarity its reforms presuppose remains to be seen.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly in terms of constituency, program, and governmental record, there is something that is distinctively Left in the French Socialist Party. The source of this unexpected resilience is partly the continued centrality of the traditional distributive concerns and issues of the Left, together with the state's ability to deliver in these areas. However, in large measure it stems also from a relatively ignored reservoir of Left identity and policies: the Left's historical commitment to *political* democracy and equality. In the French Socialist party, the political roots of Left identity have been stronger than the economic ones. Jean Jaurès and, to a lesser extent, Léon Blum are revered more for their stand on democracy, as exemplified by the Dreyfus Affair and the Riom trial, than for their stand on social and economic issues. Even when in power, French Socialism has never been particularly successful or rigorous in its pursuit of traditional left-wing economic policies: Mitterrand's two terms barely altered France's fiscal and welfare policies or its industrial relations. By contrast, the French Socialists have developed a discourse and an organization that have been extremely adept at absorbing and voicing demands for more equal access to power across sites, gender, and generations, incorporating those groups that have raised these themes.[51] The full turn to an institutional strategy of the French Feminists, as illustrated by the Gender Parity Movement, and the overlapping of Socialists and Greens well illustrate these points. It is this association with democracy

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that is the most persistent source of the Socialists' long-term resilience. The Jospin government is building on this political strand. However, it owes some of its unexpected success to its pursuit of the Left's most traditional, yet in France less prominent, economic strand.

The PS's achievements raise the interesting question of whether Left parties may be facing an opportunity to recombine their genetic material in comparable ways. Historically, national Lefts have been primarily associated with one or the other of the two traditions of economic or political equality, depending on the relative salience of political and economic conflicts during the critical juncture of party formation and early development. These early patterns have thus far been stable and enduring, as evidenced in the relative imperviousness of the workers' parties to democracy and power-related issues. By contrast, citizens' parties have been less adept at dealing with traditional employment and distributive issues.

There is some evidence, across time and in several countries, that the graft between the two strands can in fact "take." Some of the most successful Left parties, notably the Swedish Social Democrats, owe their success to their ability to be both a citizens' and a workers' party. Their capacity to do so, however, is thought today to be fraying. In the past, citizens' parties that have sought to become more like workers' parties have not been very successful. These days, the most sought-after transformation is in the opposite direction, which does not necessarily make it easier. For unadulterated workers' parties, credibility on democratic issues is likely to entail major changes in discourse and organization. Privileged and nearly exclusive alliances may have to go, a process that, as shown by British Labour, may take quite some time. What is more, new alliances will need to be constructed. This is not going to be an easy task anywhere, since political democratic issues have a more shifting constituency than class ones. An effective and charismatic leadership may act as a substitute for more institutional societal linkages but cannot do so indefinitely. In some cases, democratic issues may have been captured by a liberal or a New Politics party. Even under the best circumstances, there are inherent tensions between the universalist and inclusive inspira-

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tion of the Left and its egalitarian commitment. The current debates on immigration and citizenship illustrate this point. In sum, new citizens' parties, like the old ones, are likely to be at constant risk of becoming destabilized.

The trajectories of the French and British Lefts in recent years are cases in point of how this grafting is working or not working in the real world. Both formations, though in different degrees and different directions, appear to be breaking with their respective pasts. While, as discussed above, the French Socialists—historically a citizens' party that has fared much better on democracy than on economic and social issues—have focused on traditional economic issues and policies, the British Left—a workers' party that has long been a paragon of such a focus—has shifted its emphasis towards democratic power reforms. In both cases, these shifts have paid off electorally, as both Blair and Jospin remain popular some time after their victories. Yet whether the graft has taken hold remains to be seen.

As a citizens' party, the PS has long had an ideological and organizational repertoire that can accommodate old and new quality of life concerns. Even the Green party poses only a small threat to its strong position on democracy-related issues. In terms of agendas, discourse, voters, organizational styles, and tolerance for street politics, the overlapping between the Socialist Left and the New Politics is much more pronounced in France than in many other European countries. Still, past attempts by citizens' parties, including the PS, to pursue social and economic goals associated with workers' parties have consistently failed for lack of domestic institutional support. The type of policy instruments chosen by Jospin largely reflects these failures. A similar fate may well await recent measures aimed at job creation, most notably the thirty-five-hour workweek reform.

When we look at the seemingly unshakable popularity of the British Labour government since its return to power, it would seem that the shift from a workers' to a citizens' party is both feasible and rewarding. Although it has taken "New" Labour a long time to rebuild its internal organization and its discourse along more universalist lines, much of this transformation, it

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would seem, can in fact be carried out by leadership alone. Further, in a country where citizens are still subjects, and where voting was recently, if briefly, taxed, Labour's promise to create a "radical democracy" entails quite substantial changes. The reform of the House of Lords and the substantial devolution of power to Scotland and Wales, which may effectively end the United Kingdom, are hardly catchall measures. Still, even a citizens' party needs to reach out to society other than through its leader. The capacity of New Labour to do this remains untested. Whereas the old is mostly gone, the new in not yet in place and is meeting with some resistance; whatever the final mixture of old and new will be, their coexistence is certain to create tensions in the Labour Party. Finally, as a new citizens' party, British Labour is perhaps even more at risk than its older counterparts of losing sight of the egalitarian drive that is the other side of the Left's democratic mission.

In sum, these attempts to bring together separate Left traditions may not succeed. But then, looking back, the Left has never really had adequate solutions to its perpetual quests, nor has it been always successful in pursuing them. In trying to figure out whether it has a future, we should not be blinded by a somewhat nostalgic and misleadingly optimistic picture of its past.

ENDNOTES

[1]On the recent evolution and transformation of European Socialist Parties, see Herbert Kitschelt, *The Recent Transformation of European Social Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[2]See Russell Dalton, "Germany's Vote for a 'New Middle,'" *Current History* 92 (627) (April 1999).

[3]Other Left politicians—notably France's Minister of Economy, Finance, and Industry Dominique Strauss-Kahn—share similar views, but Lafontaine was seen as the one with the greatest chance to have them adopted at the European level. Yet his bullying failed to convert either the German or the European banks. Following his resignation, German stocks surged by 5.4 percent, and the Euro experienced its biggest gain against the dollar since its creation. *New York Times*, 13 and 15 March 1999.

[4]Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996).

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[5]Even political theorists who maintain the Left has a distinct identity—rooted in its commitment to equality, which remains highly relevant in contemporary societies—admit to major problems when shifting from principles to policies. See the exchange between Norberto Bobbio, "At the Beginning of History," and Perry Anderson, "A Sense of the Left," and "A Reply to Norberto Bobbio," *New Left Review* (231) (September-October 1998).

[6]See, for example, Carles Boix, *Political Parties, Growth and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Geoffrey Garrett, *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); R. Clayton and J. Pontusson, "Welfare State Retrenchment Revisited," *World Politics* (1) (October 1998); and Jonah Levy, "Vice into Virtue? Progressive Politics and Welfare Reform in Continental Europe," *Politics and Society* (forthcoming).

[7]I develop this argument more fully in Serenella Sferza, "The Building and Rebuilding of Parties: The French Socialist Party," book manuscript, unpublished.

[8]For a standard account of the PS's trajectory, see David Scott Bell and Byron Criddle, *The French Socialist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). On the Left's governmental experience, see George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann, and Sylvia Malzacher, eds., *The Mitterrand Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Anthony Daley, ed., *The Mitterrand Era* (London: Macmillan, 1996); and Vivien Schmidt, *From State to Market? The Transformation of French Business and Government* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[9]Jospin's lack of interest in the "Third Way" and his absence from the international meetings on the subject organized by Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Romano Prodi, and Henrique Cardozo was taken as further proof that the French Left had stepped back into its past.

[10]*Le Monde*, 26 March 1998.

[11]See N. Mayer, "Profession, statut et vote," and A. Muxel, "L'autopositionnement des jeunes sur l'échelle gauche-droite à l'épreuve des mots," both in Elisabeth Dupoirier and Jean-Luc Parodi, eds., *Les indicateurs sociopolitiques aujourd'hui* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

[12]See Daniel Boy and Nonna Mayer, eds., *L'électeur a ses raisons* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale de Sciences Politiques, 1997).

[13]At the 1995 presidential election, for example, 28 percent of the voters who had supported Jean-Marie Le Pen intended to vote for the Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin at the second ballot.

[14]Between 79 and 97 percent of French voters consistently place themselves and their politicians along a Left/Right continuum. J. Jaffré and A. Muxel, "Les rèpères politiques," in Boy and Mayer, eds., *L'electeur a ses raisons.*

[15]In 1994, fewer voters (26 percent) located themselves at the center of the political spectrum than thirty years before (36 percent). Furthermore, the electorates of the two major presidential candidates have actually grown more distant from each other in 1995 than they had been in 1988. See J. Chiche and E.

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Dupoirier, "Echelle gauche-droite et choix politiques," in Dupoirier and Parodi, eds., *Les indicateurs socio-politiques aujourd'hui.* Electoral mobility strengthened the extremes, on the Right with the Front National now consistently polling about 15 percent of the vote but also, to a lesser extent, on the Left with the extreme Left increasing from 2 percent in 1978 to 6 percent in 1995. Daniel Boy and Nonna Mayer, "Conclusion," in Boy and Mayer, eds., *L'electeur a ses raisons.*

[16]In Italy, where the thirty-five-hour workweek was part of the Ulivo's electoral promises, Jospin's determination raised serious fears of contagion. When the legislation passed, the Union movement distanced itself from this measure on the grounds that it had been adopted through legislation rather than negotiation.

[17]*Le Monde*, 20 October 1997.

[18]Whereas this was clearly a retreat from Mitterrand's "neither . . . nor" stand, which rejected both further nationalization and privatization, it set some principled boundaries for the latter and prepared the stage for the highly *dirigiste* approach to privatization that the Jospin government has thus far successfully practiced. The allocation of more resources to schools located in underprivileged neighborhoods and the reform of family allowances are examples of "positive discrimination."

[19]The Pasqua-Debré Laws made access to French citizenship for individuals born in France conditional on a variety of requirements; subjected the immigrants' right to bring close relatives into France to strict conditions and bureaucratic impediments; and considerably increased the power of the police to question suspicious looking individuals.

[20]In the recent past, the Left had alternated between very generous and very repressive stands, from Mitterrand's support for the immigrants' right to vote to Edith Cresson's extradition charters. See Patrick Ireland, "Race, Immigration and the Politics of Hate," in Daley, ed., *The Mitterrand Era*, and Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: L'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration, de 1938 a nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

[21]Many Socialist voters, especially its more popular electorate, opposed the Maastricht Treaty, as shown by the defeat of the Maastricht referendum in some Socialist strongholds like the North region.

[22]The Greens have been remarkably quick in grasping the constraints and opportunities of their governmental role, and the PCF has haltingly and not very successfully tried to present itself as the spokesman of "*le social*" and as "the left of the Left." Efforts at differentiation have increased with the approach of the European elections. In particular, the Verts' relationship with Jospin has become more tense due to the provocative style of the head of their electoral list, Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

[23]Aptly labeled the "peace congress," the Socialists' 1997 Congress of Brest witnessed the consensual election of François Hollande as the party's secretary and the official disappearance of factions, with the exception of the very small *Gauche Socialiste.*

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[24]At the beginning of the year, different polls put Jospin's positive rating at between 49 and 68 percent; 44 percent of the French had confidence in the Left. *Le Monde*, 3 and 4 January 1999.

[25]At the 1998 local elections, the "Plural Left" outscored the Republican Right by 5.77 percent. *Le Monde*, 18 March 1998.

[26]Thus, for example, asylum rights were expanded; immigrants who returned to their countries of origins were given access to their pension funds; family regroupments, as well as professional and scientific exchanges, were eased; but the administration was authorized to detain illegal immigrants for twelve days and to hold their dossiers. The laws and the debate on immigration and nationality were profoundly shaped by the report presented by Patrick Weil, an academic close to the PS.

[27]See J. M. Colombani, "Jospin, Acte 2," *Le Monde*, 14 October 1997. In the end, the two laws passed with very few changes. Whereas the Minister of Justice consented to give individuals thirteen years old and older access to French nationality, upon specific request and with family consent, the Minister of Interior agreed to lift the obligation for immigrants who sought to reunite with their relatives and obtain a "housing certificate" from their mayors.

[28]See *Le Monde*, 27 November 1998.

[29]In the aftermath of the new legislation, 52 percent of the French approved of the Chevènement-Guigou laws, including the automatic acquisition of French nationality at the age of eighteen. Even more encouraging, support for Le Pen's suggestion to send back all immigrants had declined to 15 percent, and 42 percent approved of the regularization of the undocumented immigrants. *Le Monde*, 24 December 1997. The Socialist victory against the National Front took place in Toulon, in a 1998 remake of the 1997 legislative election.

[30]Local and national experts have identified twenty-two professions that respond to these criteria, primarily in education, culture, housing, health care, mediation of urban conflicts, and the environment, and in order to keep the program close to the ground, local governments are responsible for its implementation. See A. Cole, "French Socialists in Office: Lessons from Mitterrand and Jospin," *Modern & Contemporary France* 7 (1999).

[31]*Le Monde*, 30 May 1998.

[32]*Le Monde*, Dossiers, Les 35 heures, 2 December 1998.

[33]In 1997, the unemployed staged many demonstrations in public and private spaces, from the Ecole Normale to the restaurant La Coupole, culminating in a demonstration of twenty thousand people on January 17, 1998.

[34]See Levy, "Vice into Virtue?" and Levy, "France in a Globalizing Economy: The Shifting Logic of the Welfare State," paper presented at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University, 23 November 1998.

[35]See Levy, "Vice into Virtue?" and George Ross, "Jospin So Far," *French Politics and Society* 3 (1997).

[36]Levy, "Vice into Virtue?"

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[37]George Ross, "The Euro, The 'French Model of Society' and French Politics," *French Politics and Society* (4) (Fall 1998).

[38]*Le Monde*, 2 May 1998.

[39]Thus, for example, Jospin catered to the Greens' environmental concerns by canceling the construction of a canal between the Rhone and the Rhine, and stopping the building of the Super Phenix nuclear generator. He partly soothed the Communists, who support nuclear energy, by keeping the Phenix nuclear generator operational.

[40]Dominique Strauss-Kahn, in particular, is widely praised for being a realist without being a conservative, as indicated by his support for Maastricht and for the seven hundred thousand youth jobs and the five-year jobs for unemployed youth. Strauss-Kahn has also spoken in favor of left-wing economic and financial policies aimed at helping high-risk investments and high technologies while penalizing more traditional industries and less productive investments. *Le Monde*, 20 August 1997.

[41]*Le Monde*, 9 January 1998.

[42]Quoted by A. Chemin, *Le Monde*, 24 October 1997. The undocumented aliens have staged protest actions, primarily within the church building that they have occupied, and have created a remarkably extensive and highly visible support network.

[43]The estimate went down from 3.2 percent to 2.7 percent, a rate that many analysts see as too optimistic. See Jospin's interview in *Le Monde*, 7 January 1999. Were France's economic performance to deteriorate further, two of the government's job-creation policies, whose high costs have not yet become fully operational, may be in jeopardy. The cost of the seven hundred thousand youth jobs has been estimated at 35 milliards francs, to be financed partly through existing credits. The government will also provide substantial fiscal incentives to firms that shorten the workweek. A firm that cuts its work time by 15 percent and increases its labor force by 9 percent, for example, is to receive thirteen thousand francs per additional worker in the first year and then, progressively, one thousand francs less each year for five years. Similar incentives apply to firms that cut their work time in order to prevent the loss of jobs.

[44]See J. M. Colombani, "Tout va bien. . . ," *Le Monde*, 24 November 1998.

[45]According to a report by the Banque de France, 710,000 over three years, or 450,000 by 2000 according to a more optimistic estimate by the OFCE. *Le Monde*, 22 January 1998.

[46]A majority of workers (54 percent), however, apparently wish for significant wage increases even if they were to imperil the thirty-five hours proposal, as against one third that opts for self-restraint in order to contribute to the success of the thirty-five hour workweek. BVA Poll, cited by A. Beuve Mery and C. Monnot, *Le Monde*, 26 June 1998. Of all the unions only the CFDT appears intentioned to trade wage increases for shorter hours. In the early summer, wage-centered labor conflicts were increasing. By the fall, 51 percent of the French did not believe shortening the workweek would create jobs, 48 percent of wage earners supported the thirty-five-hour proposal only without

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wage cuts against 34 percent who supported them even with cuts, and 4 percent supported them only if they came with wage cuts. CSA Poll, October 1988; *Le Monde*, 2 December 1998.

[47]Trust in business organizations and unions went down by 5 and 9 points respectively: 58 percent of the French distrusted business organizations and 44 percent distrusted the unions. By contrast, trust in the government went up from 49 to 52 percent. *Le Monde*, dossiers, Les 35 heures, 2 December 1998.

[48]A. Lebaube, "Le piège des 35 heures refermé," *Le Monde*, 17 October 1997 and 2 December 1998.

[49]The promise to give power back to the citizens—although often obscured by nationalization—was a key aspect of Mitterrand's 1981 victory and, more broadly, of the PS's renaissance in the 1970s. For an analysis of what the Socialists were up against, see Suzanne Berger, "Politics and Antipolitics in Western Europe in the Seventies," *Dædalus* 108 (1) (Winter 1979); for an analysis of why they were so successful in responding to these challenges, see Serenella Sferza, "The Shifting Advantages of Organizational Formats: Factionalism and the French Socialist Party," in Daley, ed., *The Mitterrand Era*.

[50]See Alain Bergounioux and Gérard Grunberg, *Le long remords du pouvoir* (Paris: Fayard, 1992).

[51]On the relationship between the Socialists and the women's movement, see Jane Jenson and Mariettte Sineau, *Mitterrand et les Francaises: un rendez-vous manque* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1995); Amy Mazur, *Gender Bias and the State: Symbolic Reform at Work in Fifth Republic France* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1995); on the increased presence of women in the legislature, primarily in the Green and Socialist parties, and in the government, see F. Gaspard, "Les Françaises en politique au lendemain des élections legislatives de 1997," *French Politics and Society* 15 (4) (Fall 1997).

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*Tarek E. Masoud*

# The Arabs and Islam: The Troubled Search for Legitimacy

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF JANUARY 22, 1997, in Cairo, Egypt's crowded capital, security forces conducted a series of house-to-house raids, detaining at least seventy-eight young Egyptians. Such mass arrests are not uncommon in that country of 60 million, where the state's war on Islamic fundamentalism has resulted in the arrest of hundreds—if not thousands—since 1981, most from villages in the Egyptian hinterland or from Cairo's slums, where angry young men with little hope and few prospects often turn to Islam for comfort. Police routinely arrest individuals on the mere suspicion of Islamist activity. It is often said that a beard—the universal sign of Islamic zealotry—is all it takes to arouse such suspicion.

But the men arrested on that January morning were not typical of Islamic fundamentalists. They were not poor, bearded slum dwellers but the well-groomed children of some of Egypt's most prosperous families. In fact, they were not Islamic fundamentalists at all. Their crime was "Satan worship" and "contempt" for Islam, the state religion. The evidence against them, though not an abundance of facial hair, was equally flimsy: a taste for black clothing and heavy-metal music. Their case caused a major stir in Cairo. Egypt's state-appointed mufti, Sheikh Nasr Farid Wassil, urged the "Satanics," as they were called, to repent or face the death penalty for "apostasy" in Egypt's Islamic courts. The president of al-Azhar university—the country's top Islamic institution—declared Satan worship

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part of a Zionist conspiracy to corrupt Egypt's youth, and an Egyptian author published a study linking Satanism to the popular dance, the Macarena: "I noticed that each time they played the Macarena columns of smoke filled the discos and that the movements of the dance were part of Satanic rites."[1] In the end, the suspects repented, declared their faith in Allah and His prophet, and were released.

To the casual observer, this is both tragic and comic. One would think a state that arrests people for listening to rock music must be having some difficulty coming to terms with things Western. But if we dig deeper, a glaring contradiction becomes evident: Islam is both avowed enemy and jealously defended state religion. Police routinely arrest Muslim radicals who would overturn the political order and establish a state based on their faith; but they also arrest those who would offend that faith. This is not merely a case of the Egyptian government throwing its Islamist opponents a few bones in an attempt to quiet them down. It is part of a repressive state's attempt to make up for what it lacks in democratic legitimacy by wrapping itself in the mantle of Islamic legitimacy. The result is the strengthening of radical Islam, its anti-Western agenda given credence by the very government that is trying to eradicate it. By setting itself up as the guardian of the faith, the government invites itself to be judged by its fidelity to it. But the Egyptian state, like all states, is a classic accumulator of power; it acts in its interests, and to do so, it must be flexible, free from the shackles of religious certainty. Invariably it must act in a way that affronts the faith—making peace with Israel, aiding the United States against Iraq—and when it does, the faithful protest furiously. University students take to the streets, and groups like the New Jihad and the Gama'a Islamiya wage a terrorist war that today threatens to rend asunder Egypt's social fabric.

This disturbing phenomenon is replicated throughout the Arab world: in Saudi Arabia and Jordan, in Libya and Iraq. All these regimes seek Islamic justification for their rule. Some, like Egypt, Libya, and even Iraq and Syria, do this by seeking Islamic cover for their policies. Others, like the monarchies in Jordan and Morocco, pursue a more direct relationship to the

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creed, ruling by dint of their claim of descent from Islam's prophet, Muhammed. In all of them, a battle is fought between the faith and the state on two fronts: on the one hand, the state tries to force Islamic radicals to respect its power and recognize its sovereignty; on the other, it contends with them to prove itself religiously purer, more Islamic—and thus more deserving of public fealty. But when the game of politics is played by the rules of Islam, governments, which by necessity must make bargains that offend the morally consistent, are ill-equipped to win.

## THE RIGHT TO RULE

As Francis Fukuyama has most recently noted, "All regimes capable of effective action must be based on some principle of legitimacy."[2] This legitimacy can take many forms. In revolutionary Egypt, for example, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the fiery exponent of Arab nationalism, ruled by virtue of what Max Weber called "charismatic legitimacy." Charismatic leaders "in times of spiritual, economic, ethical, religious or political emergency were neither appointed officials nor trained and salaried 'professionals' . . . but those who possessed specific physical and spiritual gifts which were regarded as supernatural, in the sense of not being available to everyone."[3] But this kind of legitimacy is obviously not sustainable for long periods of time; it is a purely personal phenomenon and cannot be passed from one leader to another. Weber suggests two additional and more durable forms of legitimacy: "rational-legal" and "traditional." Milton Esman, in a recent restatement of these Weberian categories, argues that these include: a democratic mandate, usually a victory at the polls in a free and fair election; the ability to meet public expectations for individual safety and the security of property, and the ability to provide the public with goods like food, shelter, health care, education, and ample opportunities to earn a decent livelihood; and identification with the society's norms and values.[4] The most legitimate governments score well on all of these measures; the least legitimate score poorly, and thus need to rely on coercion and force to maintain power.[5]

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Though we live in what Fareed Zakaria has called the "democratic age," the first foundation of legitimacy—namely, democracy—seems to have eluded the Arab world.[6] Of the twenty-one states of the Arab League, not one could be called democratic or liberal. In fact, in its annual survey of political rights and civil liberties entitled *Freedom in the World*, Freedom House ranks six Arab states (Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Syria) as the world's worst in terms of political freedom. And unlike in China or Russia under communism, there is no great grassroots movement for democracy in the Arab world, largely because democracy does not resonate with the average Arab. It has no basis in the Arab past and is tainted by its association with the West. Though many Arab governments hold sham elections in which the leader is swept into office with 99.99 percent of the vote and 99.99 percent voter participation, such displays are done mostly for the outside world. When Iraq's "parliament" last winter passed a resolution refusing to respect the U.S.–imposed no-fly zones over the northern and southern parts of the country, the move was recognized as a poor attempt by Saddam Hussein to paint his transgressions as a function of popular will, and thus as somehow more legitimate. One perceptive observer of the Middle East has noted that leaders like Hussein have no idea how real democracies work and do not realize that those accustomed to holding elections would find such shams offensive.[7] Meanwhile, to the people of the region, they are an irrelevance.

Other Arab governments, such as the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, naturally find any traffic with democratic symbols distasteful, and thus try to build legitimacy by providing significant material benefits to their people. The Gulf states have been particularly successful in this regard, using their oil wealth to create massive cradle-to-grave welfare states. For example, Saudi Arabia spends billions of dollars to give its citizens free education and health care, as well as subsidized housing and utilities. But this kind of mass bribery can only go so far, and poorer states like Egypt understandably find it unfeasible. Thus Middle Eastern states turn to the third traditional measure of legitimacy—emphasizing shared values. And in the great proselytizing culture of the Arab world, the most

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overriding public value, that which can immediately claim sympathy from all segments of the population, is Islam.

Islam has served as the basis for political legitimacy in the Arab world ever since the death of the prophet Muhammed in the seventh century A.D. Until the early part of this century, the Islamic world was united under a series of successive caliphates, the leader of which, the caliph (or *khalifah*, in Arabic), was considered the prophet's temporal and spiritual successor. The first four caliphs, men who had known the prophet during his lifetime and who were each selected by learned men of the community, are referred to today as the Rightly Guided Caliphs. In the annals of Islamic history, they are considered the most legitimate of rulers, truest to the prophet's legacy, and their period is considered a kind of Islamic utopia to which the Muslim world still aspires. After these four men passed from the scene (three of them were murdered, perhaps indicative of what sort of utopia this was), the caliphate became a much more traditional monarchy, changing hands over the centuries between competing dynasties. The first of these monarchic caliphates, that of the Umayyads, was established some thirty years after Muhammed's death and was the first regime of the Arab world to face serious problems of legitimacy. According to the Islamic historian Shireen Hunter, the Umayyads "based their rule on the absolute divine will," declaring it "part of a predetermined godly plan."[8] This justification of Umayyad legitimacy contributed to one of the most vigorous theological debates of the day in Islam, that of predeterminism versus free will. As Hunter points out, since the Umayyads argued that their reign was God's will, they came out in favor of the predeterminist school. In this way, Islamic theological speculation eventually devoted itself to explaining—or challenging—the legitimacy of the prevailing political order.

The caliphate system was not a theocratic rule of the priests. The caliph acquired his religious credentials as "guardian of the faith" and "shadow of God on Earth"—qualities essential to his legitimacy as ruler—by virtue of assuming power, not the other way around. The full force of Islamic thought was put to the service of explaining the caliph's right to preside over the community of believers, which is why some of the most vigor-

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ous periods of Islamic judicial thought occurred when the caliphate shifted from one dynasty to another, as each one needed to explain itself anew. When the last of the great caliphates of the Islamic world, that of the Ottoman sultans, crumbled in 1918, the successor regimes of the modern Middle East inherited this notion of religion as ratifier of rulers. It was natural that they too would seek Islamic sanction for their power.

Even the leaders of the so-called secular Arab nationalist movements that arose in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq in the wake of the Ottoman collapse sought a place for Islam in their ideology, realizing that without it, the project would be unable to capture the Arab imagination. One of the founders of the Baath school of Arab nationalism, a Syrian intellectual named Michel Aflaq, though a Greek Orthodox Christian, declared Islam to be the most sublime expression of Arabism, born of the genius of Arab civilization and history. Absent Islam, being an Arab meant nothing. As the late scholar Hasan Enayat put it, "The Arabs cannot promote their identity without at the same time exalting Islam, which is the most abiding source of their pride."[9]

Consider Syria. Its dictator, Hafez Al-Assad, is considered the most avowedly secular of Arab nationalists, but even he has at times recognized the need to use Islamic symbols to derive authenticity. In 1973, Assad issued a new constitution in which the old requirement that the head of state be a Muslim was omitted, allowing him, an Alawite (and thus by most calculations a non-Muslim) to rule. When the public protested, he relented—and then, not to be denied, found a Lebanese Shiite cleric who would rule that Alawites were in fact Muslims. But even with his newly confirmed religious status, Assad would never be Muslim enough for some of his countrymen, and Islamic protest against his rule continued. In 1982, when a group of Islamic militants seized control of the town of Hama, he reacted with devastating force, killing an estimated twenty thousand people in an extended military campaign.[10] Some have pointed to Hama as evidence of Assad's thorough disregard for Islamic sensibilities. But an equally powerful argument can be made that the episode occurred because he had given so much ground to the Islamists, who felt increasingly able to challenge him, as they did at Hama. And recently, cognizant of

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the Sunni public's growing discomfort at being ruled by one considered outside the faith, Assad has again taken to amassing Islamic credentials. In public speeches he emphasizes Syria's Islamic heritage, he holds meetings with Islamic scholars (who are on the public payroll), he has built mosques, and he has even founded some Islamic schools. And when Jordan made its peace with Israel in 1994, after having promised that it would not do so before Syria, he played to Muslim resentments by declaring the agreement "apostasy."[11]

In that other wholly totalitarian state of the Arab world, Iraq, much the same pattern is evident. During the Gulf War, as American warplanes visited a catastrophe upon his countrymen, Saddam Hussein could feel his legitimacy eroding as his people increasingly blamed him for the hell they were experiencing. In response, he turned to Islam. This tormentor of the Muslim Brotherhood and leader of the fiercely secular Iraqi Baath party added the words "Allah is Greater" to the Iraqi flag and began to claim descent from the prophet Muhammed in a perverse effort to rally popular support. It was a ham-handed attempt, to be sure, and, as in the Syrian case, utterly transparent. Men like Hussein and Assad, for all of their manipulations of the faith, rule in the end by the fist. But in the rest of the Arab world, in soft authoritarian regimes like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which are unwilling or unable to use devastating force to maintain control, Islam is a greater source of legitimacy, and thus a greater source of trouble.

## THE BARGAIN GONE BAD

Nowhere are the costs of manipulating Islam to legitimize the state more evident than in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's story involves a Faustian bargain struck by the monarchs of that country with a brand of fundamentalist Islam called Wahabism. The bedrock of the royal family's legitimacy is a pact made over two hundred and fifty years ago by the founding father of the Saud family, Mohammed Ibn Saud, with the religious revivalist from which the sect takes its name, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahab.

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Abdul Wahab was troubled by the un-Islamic practices—the veneration of saints and ancestors, and even of the prophet Muhammed—that had crept into the popular exercise of Islam over the centuries, and was determined that they be purged. In Mohammed Ibn Saud, a minor sheik in a small desert town, he saw just the man to take up his cause. A deal was struck: Saud undertook to fight all comers for the sake of God, and Abdul Wahab promised him God's help and bounty (and assured him that God would allow him to collect taxes in any lands he captured.) Regarding themselves as the only true believers and all others as apostates and infidels, Saud's hordes conquered much of the eastern half of the Arabian peninsula, then nominally under Ottoman control. His son and grandson continued the run and by 1814 reached the Iraqi and Syrian borders before being crushed by the Ottoman governor of Egypt.

In the years following, Saudi power in the peninsula ebbed and flowed, until by the beginning of this century the family had lost its lands and was living in exile in Kuwait. In 1902 a scion of the family, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, began a campaign to recapture his family's glory. He took the city of Riyadh, the seat of the old Saudi kingdoms, and set his sights on the entire peninsula. To do this he manipulated things to marvelous effect. He assembled Bedouin tribesmen in camps he called *hijra* (migration, as in migration from ignorance to enlightenment) and schooled them in Wahabism's radically unitarian doctrine. By 1927, the *ikhwan* (brothers, as they were now called) had helped Abdul Aziz capture most of Arabia and were poised to take their holy war to the rest of the Muslim world. But Abdul Aziz was a realist, and he knew his limits—if the British and French had looked the other way when he took the inconsequential oases of the Arabian peninsula, they would not be so lax in defending their interests in Syria and Iraq. He wisely concluded a treaty with the British recognizing his sovereignty over the lands he controlled but binding him to go no further. The *ikhwan* were outraged at this betrayal of their cause. There were more infidels to crush, more lands to bring under Islam's sway. Some eight thousand of them continued to lead raids on territories outside the Saudi domain. The contract with the faith could not hold up against the contract with British

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power, and by 1929 Abdul Aziz was forced to crush his former disciples.

The British political resident in Arabia at the time, Sir Percy Cox, later opined that Abdul Aziz had not made a single mistake in the process of setting up his kingdom. He was wrong. Abdul Aziz did not take away the central lesson of his clash with the *ikhwan*, that religion can only be manipulated for so long. Instead of abandoning Wahabism, he went on to build a state that honored Wahabi sensibilities (in rhetoric, if not always in reality.) For example, when Wahabi leaders objected to his plan to introduce radio to the kingdom, on the grounds that it could carry the influences of Satan, Abdul Aziz arranged for them to hear a radio-transmitted recitation of the Koran, arguing that nothing that could propagate the word of God could be from Satan.[12] Abdul Aziz based the kingdom's laws on interpretations of *shariah* (Islamic law); thus women are denied the right to drive automobiles, the theater is banned, Islamic education in schools is compulsory, and businesses are forced to close five times daily for prayer. All of this is enforced by the *muttawas*—old, bearded men employed by the government's Committee for Enjoining Virtue and Preventing Vice—who patrol the streets in search of violators of God's law: women whose ankles are exposed, men who avoid prayer, couples who show too much affection.

The Saudis may allow the *muttawas* and their ilk free reign at home, but in return, they expect religious cover for their policies, particularly in matters of foreign affairs. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the interests of the royal family—who feared Russian encroachment—and those of the naturally anticommunist Wahabi zealots meshed seamlessly. From the pulpits of their mosques imams railed against Soviet aggression and encouraged Muslims to lend their support to the cause. Money flowed to the Afghan *mujahedeen* (prompting PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to famously complain that he might have obtained comparable support for the Palestinian cause if Jerusalem, Al-Quds in Arabic, had been named the more Afghan-sounding Qudsabad.) In schools across the country children were taught that to take part in the just war in Afghanistan—and to die in it—was a fate to which all Muslims should aspire.

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By the end of the war, which ended much the way the Saudis and the Wahabis had hoped, most Arabs who had taken part in the fighting returned home. But some of the more zealous (like the notorious Saudi financier and terrorist-at-large Osama bin Laden) decided to remain and continue the struggle against all of Islam's enemies. Just as the *ikhwan* sixty years earlier did not know when to quit, neither did five thousand of these "Arab Afghans," as they have come to be called.[13] Then came the 1990 Gulf War. To men who had fought a Soviet invasion of Muslim lands, the stationing of foreign troops in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province was even worse than the invasion of Afghanistan. After all, Saudi Arabia was the "Land of the Two Holy Mosques," the home of Islam's holiest shrines, land upon which no infidel was to tread.

There is a bitter irony here, since the Eastern Province, where the vast majority of the American troops are based, has never pretended to any real Islamic significance. Neither the sayings of the prophet nor the Koran give it any special mention.[14] In fact, during the prophet's time, and until this century, it was a bit of a backwater—a thousand kilometers away from the holy shrines in Mecca and Medina. But Saudi Arabia's rulers dubbed their entire dominion, the Eastern Province included, the "Land of the Two Holy Mosques" in order to give their rule a sense of divine sanction. The present monarch, King Fahd, even began calling himself the "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" instead of the more secular sounding, and less Islamically hefty, "His Majesty." Thus the holiness that once belonged only to Mecca and Medina was essentially extended by royal decree to all of the lands within Saudi Arabia's modern borders. The recent terrorism against U.S. targets in Saudi Arabia and last year's bombings of the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam are the actions of men who, having been fed the myths of the righteous Islamic state and the "Land of the Two Holy Mosques" by Saudi Arabia's sly rulers, now rail against those rulers for violating those myths.[15]

And so for the second time this century, the uneasy truce between religion and state in Saudi Arabia is unraveling. Not even the leadership—tired old men made cautious by years of compromise—has control of this new batch of *ikhwan*, the

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students who learned their lessons too well, who read their religion textbooks too closely. For years the Saudi "third way," that narrow course between secularism and theocracy, was hailed as a marvel of statecraft. Now that way is leading to ruin. Reason of state and reasons of faith cannot indefinitely coexist. The times in which they do are fleeting, such as during the building of Abdul Aziz's empire and the Afghan war; but when they diverge, the battle for primacy is bloody.[16]

Saudi Arabia is not the only battleground. Egypt, that proud, centuries-old nation on the banks of the Nile, is also reeling from its accommodations with radical Islam. When Nasser died in 1970, the country's leadership was in a crisis of legitimacy. Nasser had established a deep connection with his people; his cry "Raise your head, brother" had given pride and hope to millions of Egyptians who believed their leader would increase Egypt's stature among nations. Even when Nasser's revolution was proved to be, as Fouad Ajami writes, "full of sound and fury and illusion," the Egyptians would not let go of their savior. When the country's much-vaunted military was smashed by Israel in a matter of hours in 1967, and Nasser resigned in shame, the Egyptians turned out in droves—in one of the few unscripted displays of public affection for a leader in modern Middle Eastern history—and begged him to remain. When he died, the regime's position could not have been more tenuous.

Into this breach stepped Anwar Al-Sadat, a little-known member of Nasser's Free Officers Movement that had deposed King Farouk in 1952. He was neither as physically imposing as Nasser nor was he, as far as anyone could tell, as gifted an orator. One commentator noted that Egyptians were not so much mourning for the charismatic leader who had passed on as lamenting the uninspiring fellow who replaced him. Without Nasser's charisma and hold over the public imagination, much of the legitimacy that underpinned the regime evaporated overnight. Sadat would look to Islam to replenish it.

Islam had been of little use to Nasser; he ruled by the force of his personality and by the promise of a unified Arab state.[17] Sadat, on the other hand, embraced it. From the outset his regime was under attack, not so much from radical Islam as from communists and socialist Arab nationalists who could see

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that this new man was no Nasser. They wanted to push him into the arms of the Soviets, and into the bankrupt, sham unifications of Arab countries that even Nasser could not make work. Sadat wanted to modernize his country, to free it of the burdens of socialism and constant wars with Israel. In order to counter this leftist threat, he released hundreds of Islamist political prisoners, men jailed by Nasser for their opposition to the regime. He encouraged the formation of Islamic groups at Egypt's colleges and universities, hoping that they would form a counterweight to the Nasserite purists.

Sadat also used the *ulema*, religious scholars of al-Azhar University, to legitimize his conduct as head of state. For example, when food shortages led to widespread riots in 1977, Sadat called upon al-Azhar to denounce the riots as un-Islamic. But there was a transaction involved here. In return for religious support, Sadat instituted compulsory religious education in schools and universities and rewrote the constitution to make *shariah* a "main source" of all Egyptian law. The bargain seemed to be working nicely. Sadat was usually able to secure the *fatwas* he needed to justify his policies—at one point even alcohol consumption and usury were declared Islamically permissible by pliant clerics. And in 1979, when Sadat was deserted by the Arab world for traveling to Jerusalem and subsequently signing a peace treaty with Israel, the *ulema* again came through, ruling that this "believing president"—as Sadat liked to call himself—had kept the faith.

But Sadat's last move was too much for the most hard-core of Islamists. He had led them to believe that he would rule according to their will. He legitimated their will by asking them to legitimate his own, and when he had to act in a way that could not possibly receive religious sanction—after all, there is not much flexibility in the world of religious certainty—the deal backfired, and he was assassinated. The Islamic groups he had allowed to flower in Egypt's colleges and universities turned against him. One such group, at the University of Assyut, became the dreaded Gama'a Islamiya, today one of Egypt's deadliest terrorist organizations.

The new president, Hosni Mubarak, might have taken a lesson from his predecessor's failed accommodation of the faith;

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but like Abdul Aziz in Saudi Arabia before him, he has not. Though the government aggressively represses Islamic militants, at the same time it promotes its own brand of Islam in an effort to outdo its Islamist opponents in terms of religious purity. The Islamic content of school curricula increases yearly, the government reserves certain hours on television and radio for religious programming, and al-Azhar has even been allowed to ban scores of books over the last two decades on the grounds that they are un-Islamic. But all of this only feeds into the public desire for a more Islamicized society. And so rock-music fans are hauled into jail. The state battles Islam on the one hand while trying to placate it with the other. It ends up accomplishing neither.

The tragic story repeats itself throughout the Arab world. The bleak situation in Sudan offers a glimpse of what might come. Sudan's president from 1969 to 1985, Jaafar Nemeiri, like Egypt's Sadat, began his fling with Islamist movements in order to counter the threat from the radical left. But in 1983 he went one step further, instituting *shariah* law with its harsh penal code mandating executions for adultery and amputation for theft. To further please the Islamists, Nemeiri relegated the country's Christians to second-class status and suspended the Christian south's limited autonomy. The civil war between the northern Arabs and the southern Christians, which Nemeiri had succeeded in ending in 1972, began anew. Moderates and Christians resigned from the government, and Nemeiri replaced them with Islamists. In 1985, with his country wracked by war, Nemeiri was overthrown by the military. But the Islamists had had their taste of power, and in 1989 they staged a coup of their own. Today Sudan is a so-called Islamic state, one that shows little remaining trace of the public euphoria that attended its founding. Islamic economics, which promised to repair the damage wrought by decades of statist economics, turned out to be nothing more than harsh "free market" reforms designed to concentrate wealth at the top. The Sudanese pound was sharply devalued, and price controls and subsidies were lifted almost overnight. This shock therapy, coupled with the civil war in the south, has caused a famine the severity of which is measured in terms of hundreds of thousands of lives. The country's human

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rights record is abysmal. In addition to the so-called Islamic punishments, political opposition is not tolerated, jails are filled with political detainees, and newspapers critical of the regime—even ones with Islamic coloration—are closed by the government. The answers that radical Islam offered to the woes of the Sudanese have only made them worse. The Islamic utopia was not to be, for it existed only in the rhetoric of leaders anxious to exploit the popular longing for a more ordered, prosperous society.

Unfortunately, there seem to be no forces opposing this trend toward radical Islamic ruin. There are, of course, educated, secular elements in the Arab world, but they are being squeezed from below, by Islamists with popular support and sympathy, and from above, by regimes eager to curry favor with the Islamists and equally suspicious of calls for more open government. In short, there is nowhere for these moderates to go. There would be hope for the Arabs if the lessons of Sudan would register; but the unifying motif of the Arab world's encounters with Islam seems to be lessons not learned.

## THE EXAMPLE OF THE WEST

Why do the countries of Europe not share a similar relationship with their faith? Why is there no destructive effort by the states of that region to seek legitimation from Christianity? The answer lies in the fact that while Islamic clerics were busy thinking up religious justifications for the rule of caliphs, the Europeans were banishing religion from the political sphere altogether. The separation of church and state is firmly embedded there. It began with the Reformation, which ended the notion that one man—in this case a priest—could impose his will on another, what one writer has called "the death of certainty."[18] Each individual was responsible for his actions before God and no one else. This proposition took time to wend its way into the realm of politics and the relationship between church and state. It was pushed along by the Thirty Years' War of the seventeenth century, between the princes of Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, and the subsequent Peace of Westphalia, which defined the modern nation-state and gave it supremacy over the

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faith; it was sealed by the French revolution, which served as the catalyst for the dismantling of Europe's national religious establishments. In the eighteenth century, the U.S. Bill of Rights would take this to its logical conclusion, granting U.S. citizens full religious freedom and thus erecting a wall of separation between church and state.

But the relative political stability enjoyed in Europe—the dignity of political discourse, the prosperity of daily life—have not convinced the Arabs of the usefulness of the European model. In part, this is because the Arab world's relationship to the West is that of the conquered to the conqueror, with all of the hatred and resentment that implies. The Arabs have still not recovered from their successive defeats by the West. The first was the vanquishing of the Ottoman Empire, which, though Turkish, could be reasonably claimed by the Arabs because of its fidelity to Islam, the Arab faith. Then came the Arab losses to Israel, a country that they deemed nothing more than a Western colony, a European agent in the eternal struggle between the Arab and the infidel. The Arab world has spent much of the last 150 years struggling to come to terms with its disappointments and trying to unlock the secrets of Western ascendance. The Islamic revivalist *salafiya* movement of the nineteenth century argued that the West had won through superior technology. Muslim leaders, they argued, had rejected Western science and technology (the best that culture had to offer) while adopting its political values and institutions (the worst that culture had to offer)—and departing from the pure principles of the prophet Muhammed. Only by embracing Islamic principles (and advanced Western technology) could the Muslim world recapture its glory.

And so there was never a serious attempt—or at least one that enjoyed much public sympathy—to locate the success of the West in its secularism and pattern of representative government. Sayyid Qutb, the chief proselytizer of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, wrote that the West was locked in a spiral of decline that began with the Renaissance and intensified "during the Enlightenment," when society loosed itself "from the reigns of the church, and simultaneously, strayed from God and from the course that He sets for human life."[19] The great ideological

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movements that have seized the Arab imagination in this century—pan-Arabism and, now, pan-Islamism—are manifestations of the Arab desire to overcome the West without sacrificing that which is quintessentially Arab or Muslim. It is a desire to redeem the Arabs and Islam by finding an Arab or Islamic key to success. So the best future lay in the Islamic past. And if the past is best, then the modern—and the foreign—are to be viewed with suspicion. Thus instead of democracy, the Islamist pines for the caliphate—that old, anachronistic institution, a strange sort of benign autocracy (perhaps semidemocratic, perhaps not) that only worked in the immediate aftermath of the death of the prophet Muhammed, a time when the Islamic community was no more than an agglomeration of tribes in an unremarkable corner of the desert. But the caliphate is the extent of Islam's history in power, and it is an unblemished record. As long as that is the case, the promise of a return to the "Islamic state" will maintain its grip on the Arab mind.[20]

What, then, is to be done? Some have suggested that the regimes of the Middle East should institute democratic reforms, that once given the right to vote, people will elect those who can deliver a better life. More likely, they will just elect fundamentalists who can woo them with their rhetoric. But even if Islamists come to power this way, it is argued, they will be forced by the necessities of democratic consensus building to moderate their stances in the hope of winning the next election. It is more likely that they will ensure that there will never be another one. The "Islamic State," as it is conceived by leading Islamists, is incompatible with democracy. After all, the Islamic utopia strives to recreate the reign of the prophet and the caliphs—and they were never elected, never had to contend with a free press, and were unfamiliar with the need for religious freedom.

And so perhaps the only solution to the Arab world's political dysfunctions, the only way to free the Arab mind of the shackles of radical Islam and cause it finally to look elsewhere for the answers to its dilemmas, is to allow the Islamists their day. Consider Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979. That was the Thirty Years' War turned on its head: the faith won, and the princes were sent into ignominious exile. But the reign of God on Earth

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is coming undone, having proven itself unable to provide for the needs of its people. Unemployment and inflation are uncontrollable, and Iran's isolation from the West has cost it countless billions of dollars. The country's youthful electorate sounded a note of protest in May of 1997, when it swept the perceived moderate, Mohammed Khatami, into power. Debates have raged about whether Khatami is indeed a moderate (this writer has argued that the reputation is largely undeserved), but there is no question that Iran's people are fed up with theocratic politics. Lay intellectuals, like the scholar Hosein Dabbagh (known by his pen name, Abdol Karim Soroush), argue that theocracy contradicts Islam's basic tenets by investing power in a clerical elite, and truly moderate clerics call for the religious establishment to rescue itself from political life before the people rise up against it and force it from society altogether. This, coupled with Iranians' unmistakable desire for more traffic with the West, indicate a drift toward a post-Islamic era in that country.

The idea of the Islamic state, the dream of the pious polity, will be proven bankrupt only after it has had its day in the sun. This is not altogether surprising. Arab nationalism, too, had to reign before it was discredited. It is already happening in Sudan, and as the Islamist challenge grows stronger in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, perhaps it can be expected to happen there too. Arab countries learn not to touch the fire only by getting burned—and, as we have seen, sometimes even that is not enough to drive the message home. It is not enough that Islam is not working in Iran or Sudan; Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other Arab countries must also have their flings with it. It is too late to pull back from the brink. Radical Islam has already been set loose and legitimated by governments that manipulated it to give them legitimacy of their own. If the Egyptian government ceases arresting heavy-metal fans and branding them Satan worshippers, the Islamists will not be diminished; they will merely have a new platform on which to attack the regime. And so it seems Islam will not be denied the halls of power. But, just as certainly, it will not be allowed to dwell there forever.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ENDNOTES

[1]"Cracking Down on Deep Purple," *Newsweek* (Atlantic Edition), 17 February 1998; "Macarena linked to Satan worship in Egypt: Author," *Agence France Presse*, 28 January 1997.

[2]Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 15.

[3]Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Domination," in *Economy and Society*, 4th ed. (1956), II, 662–679, reprinted in W. G. Runciman, ed., *Weber: Selections in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 226.

[4]Milton J. Esman, "State and Street in the Muslim Middle East," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* (Summer/Fall 1996).

[5]But even in a situation where a leader rules by force and coercion, he must at least be seen as legitimate by those who would act as his agents in the application of that force, i.e., the regime that surrounds him. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 15–17.

[6]Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1997).

[7]Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 309–310.

[8]Shireen T. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 46.

[9]Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 112.

[10]Patrick Seale, *Assad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[11]Miller, *God Has Ninety Nine Names*, 314.

[12]Another version of this popular Saudi story substitutes the radio with the telephone. The version I use is considered least apocryphal.

[13]David Gardner, "A Modern Assassin," *The Financial Times*, 22 August 1998.

[14]In 1991 the Saudi-funded World Muslim League began a campaign to convince Muslims that the distance between the Eastern Province and the holy sites in Mecca and Medina made it acceptable for American troops to be stationed there, but by then it was too late. The damage control was recognized for what it was.

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[15]Andrew Loewenstein and Tarek Masoud, "Saudi Arabia and the Westphalian State System," paper presented at the International Studies Association convention, Minneapolis, March 1998.

[16]Tarek Masoud, "Desert Storm: Bin Ladin's Ideological Roots," *The New Republic*, 28 December 1998.

[17]But even Nasser, who waged a merciless campaign to crush Islamist opposition during his rule, was not above seeking Islamic cover for his policies. He justified his socialist agrarian-reform program, which involved confiscating huge tracts of land from prosperous individuals and resditributing them among the farmers, as "Islamically just." See Miller, *God Has Ninety Nine Names*, 79.

[18]"The Trickiest One of All: The Chief Obstacle to a Democratic Future for Muslims," *The Economist,* 6 August 1994.

[19]Sayyid Qutb, *Al Islam wa-Mushkilat al-Hadara* (Islam and the Problem of Civilization), quoted in Miller, *God Has Ninety Nine Names*, 62.

[20]This is not to say that Islam writ large is to blame for the Muslim world's political dysfunctions. True, from Mali to Malaysia, one encounters the same problems of political instability and economic underdevelopment found in the Arab world, and the common denominator is Islam. But like the nations it embraces, the practice of Islam varies greatly throughout them. To ascribe to the faith the problems of countries as diverse as Pakistan, Egypt, and Malaysia is to ignore the fact that each of these countries has a distinct history, one in which Islam was shaped more by the culture than it was the shaper of that culture. A scholar seeking to understand the lack of democracy in, say, Malaysia, might be better served by looking at Singapore, a country with a similar culture and pattern of economic development, than by looking at Egypt, which shares with Malaysia only the fact that its people face East when they pray. Non-Arab Muslim countries like Malaysia, Bangladesh, Mali, and Indonesia (the world's largest Muslim country) came relatively late to Islam. They were never its proselytizers and had little of their identity bound up with it. They were, to be sure, part of the great Islamic kingdoms that rose and fell from the seventh through the nineteenth centuries but were never central to them; when those kingdoms dissolved or, as they did in the twentieth century, bowed to Western might, these peoples on the periphery felt no great sense of loss. In fact, if anything, they saw in the crumbling of the old order a chance to determine their own fates, set up their own nations, make their own political kingdoms. Islam was certainly something they grappled with, but, with the exceptions of Iran and Pakistan, it was mainly part of the cultural backdrop of their process of nation building. It was not a defining force and was thus not mutated into the political ideology that it has become in the Arab world.

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Both the Egyptian and the Algerian states are challenged by Islamist political movements whose power has increased greatly in recent years. The ideological family to which these movements claim to belong may be traced to a common source, the "Society of Muslim Brothers," created in Egypt in 1928–1929 by Hassan al-Banna. The sociocultural and age groups most often represented in the movements consist of "counter-elites" trained in the applied sciences (medicine, engineering, computer science, etc.), but also the urban underprivileged. Both states in recent decades have undergone parallel and painful transitions from planned to market economies, from "socialist" authoritarianism to some sort of political pluralism and freedom of the press. While the Egyptian state has managed to maintain itself as a state and to control the entirety of its territory, despite sporadic violence in the Upper Valley, the Algerian state has been unable to control political violence, to restore public order in many areas of the country, into which neither the armed forces nor the police dare to venture anymore.

Within the Islamist movement there are different factions—some favor participation in the political system and try to reach agreements with segments of the ruling elite while others wish to topple the state apparatus. Though their methods differ, all Islamist groups share a common political philosophy: an "Islamic state" should supersede the present "Westernized state." The main characteristic of this future "Islamic state" should be the implementation of *shari'a,* a judicial system tracing back to the sacred texts of Islam.

—Gilles Kepel
"Islamists versus the State in Egypt and Algeria"

from *Dædalus*, Summer 1995
"The Quest for World Order"

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*Douglas McGray*

# The Silicon Archipelago

"MILK HEARINGS HERE JULY 2," "Feeder Balks on Rollbacks, Cites Figures"—almost fifty years ago, these stories anchored the financial page of the *San Jose Mercury*, Santa Clara County's local newspaper. With one hundred thousand acres of orchards and two hundred thousand food-processing plants just south of San Francisco Bay, the county was among the top agricultural producers in the United States. The region remains one of the most fertile stretches of land in the world, but the harvest these days comes in the form of IPOs. The plum, cherry, pear, and apricot farmers that fueled the region's economy through World War II have been replaced by Apple, Sun Microsystems, and Oracle. Today's headlines tell the story: "Compaq to Spin Off Altavista," "FTC Orders Apple to Restore Free Support," "Imagine You're an eBay Made Billionaire." Santa Clara County is best known these days as Silicon Valley, where high-tech multinationals and tiny start-ups produce the big ideas of the information age.[1]

Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohammed hopes his own farmland will undergo a similar transformation. He has allocated $20 billion to turn thirty miles of rubber trees and palm-oil plantations south of Kuala Lumpur into a "Multimedia Supercorridor" (MSC). Mahathir believes he can build a new Silicon Valley in his own country that will convince the world's high-tech innovators to set up shop in Malaysia—and he may be right. But just next door, Singapore has announced plans to become the world's first "Intelligent Island," a near-future utopia built upon a similar technology corridor. India has its

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money on Bangalore. Boston and Washington, D.C., are trying to convince high-tech industry leaders that the United States has two coasts. Mexico maintains high hopes for Guadalajara. Switzerland promotes the shores of Lake Geneva. South Africa envisions a high-tech oasis in Cape Town.

Scattered around the globe, several dozen planned information technology (IT) communities are in some stage of high-profile development, each one a self-proclaimed "next Silicon Valley." If they live up to advance billing, they will attract copious amounts of foreign investment and expertise, the information economy's most valuable currency. In exchange, governments are prepared to offer tax breaks, cheap labor, state-of-the-art office space, high-speed Internet access, research labs, and cut-rate telecommunications, all with a heavy dose of gee-whiz futurism.

Why settle for a far-flung Silicon Valley copy if the real thing is worthy of such imitation? Modern communications technology, the logic goes, has made location irrelevant—and there is a measure of truth in this argument. Between the Internet, videoconferencing, and falling international telephone and airfare rates, distance is not the insurmountable obstacle that it used to be. Yet, paradoxically, the chief selling points of today's islands of IT expertise still revolve around proximity: proximity to a university, proximity to an influential market, proximity to competing and ancillary firms, proximity to new technologies and ideas. Although the rhetoric of information-age prophets suggests a trend toward decentralization, their industry—like entertainment, finance, or fashion—seems to maintain a particular affinity for what Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter has dubbed "clusters."[2]

If location still matters, many governments may be betting too much on their ability to build a successful, sustainable IT community. Evidence suggests that very few of them will make a dent in the global market, at least in the short to medium term. High-tech infrastructure, low input costs, and tax shelters will not necessarily keep innovators from relocating to traditional markets once they have a viable product. Given the lure of foreign universities and the abundance of high-paying jobs in the United States, still the world's most important IT market,

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developing nations may be hard pressed to keep their talent at home in the first place, much less lure the best and brightest from abroad. And some governments may find the sacrifices they must make to stay competitive unpalatable or politically untenable—exposing restricted societies to unrestricted Internet access, for example, or opening borders and allowing "full speed ahead" globalization.

Most countries will benefit from information technology in the long run, and a few will benefit tremendously, if they are patient. Despite widespread enthusiasm for a world without distance, some unlikely countries may build a booming high-tech sector by leveraging old-fashioned regional advantages and strong local loyalties. But for a number of reasons, the real success of Silicon Valley—sustained innovation—will be difficult for most governments to replicate. Few of the clusters in the growing silicon archipelago will live up to their information-age hype.

## DISTANCE IS DEAD, LONG LIVE DISTANCE

Researchers at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations recently asked political leaders in Washington to name the most pressing issue facing Americans today. The top three responses might have been expected, particularly given America's domestic political climate: education, dissatisfaction with government, and immorality. But the fourth most common reply was the Asian economy.[3]

A generation ago, a domestic economic crisis halfway around the world might have generated comparable anxiety among Washington's elite, but for entirely different reasons. During the Cold War, a failure of the free market anywhere was a failure of the American way of life. More immediately, a weak economy was an economy susceptible to communist infection. We still speak of financial contagion, but it is a very different kind of disease—much more communicable, and spread through different channels. Policymakers in Washington must worry about Asia's sagging market and weak currencies as a possible domestic recession in the making.

The *Economist* calls it "the death of distance," the increasing global interaction of markets and individuals thanks to cheap

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and versatile information technology.[4] New technology has been chipping away at the barriers of distance throughout the 1990s. Vice President Al Gore, addressing IT industry leaders and the media on the White House lawn last November, told the story of a village near Chincehros, Peru. The village increased its annual income by 500 percent, he explained, through an on-line partnership with an international export company that now ships the village's vegetables for sale in New York City.[5] The scenario could have easily been lifted from an IBM television ad: recent spots have featured a grandmotherly Italian woman who sells her olive oil on the Internet and a young man who turns to e-commerce to provide for his family instead of leaving the village.

High-tech human interest stories (real and make-believe) may crowd the information age's spotlight, but the unglamorous telephone was its breakthrough star. In 1927, residential telephone service opened between New York and the United Kingdom, for those who could afford to pay over 80 dollars per minute. Today, a call at peak hours from New York to the UK can cost as little as 12 cents per minute with carrier discounts—scarcely more than a domestic call. The World Bank estimates that peak time transatlantic rates will drop further in the next decade, by as much as two thirds, thanks to the increased capacity of new fiber-optic lines and satellites and new technologies for compressing data. It is conceivable that if capacity continues to increase, phone companies will charge a flat rate to call anywhere in the world.

Falling telephone rates have already made it increasingly feasible to do business globally or spread a firm's operations across national borders. But for countries in the market for a domestic IT industry, the telephone has been most important as a medium of Internet penetration. The falling cost and wider reach of local calling services worldwide, due to increased capacity and privatization, offer millions of new users a viable on-ramp.

Like many of today's consumer technologies, the Internet grew out of U.S. Defense Department funding. In the early 1960s, scientists affiliated with the Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) first proposed a modest na-

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tional network of computers that might help them pool their resources. In the early 1980s, their idea took shape as the modern Internet.[6]

Marshall McLuhan, writing in 1964, noted that the telephone was first received as a novelty, "a new contraption, used more for entertainment than for business." But soon enough, "one of the most startling consequences of the telephone was its introduction of a 'seamless web' of interlaced patterns in management and decision-making."[7] During the 1980s the Internet was a similar novelty, if not a mystery, for all but a few enthusiasts. Many features that eventually drew people on-line—graphics, streaming video and audio, secure financial transactions, telephony, and an interface that average users could understand—were still years away. Beginning in the mid-1980s, however, that club of enthusiasts began to double annually. In the early 1990s, the technology finally realized its commercial potential with the advent of the World Wide Web. Using a new program called Mosaic, developed by Netscape's Marc Andreesen at the University of Illinois, the average computer user could connect to the Internet and browse through interactive collections of text and graphics. There were only a handful of those web sites at first—around fifty by the end of 1993. As of early 1999, that number had grown to five million.

Today, almost 160 million people worldwide are on line, with Internet traffic doubling every four hundred days. Rapid penetration of both PCs and the Internet, particularly outside the United States, could dwarf those figures in the next five years. Analysts expect China's 1.4 million Internet users to swell to near 10 million by 2002. Europe's 12.5 million wired households could triple during the same period. Singapore expects half of its citizens to be wired to the Internet within five years, and Latin America cannot keep up with demand. Although estimates vary, analysts predict that as many as 350 million people worldwide could be on line within the next five years.

With such widespread Internet use, basic information-age philosophy seems to threaten the dominance of high-tech industry hubs like Silicon Valley or Tokyo. Nicholas Negroponte of MIT is just one of many futurists predicting that telecommuting will encourage a migration out of such cities, transforming a

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pattern of work largely unchanged since the industrial revolution. If Negroponte is right and a home office on the shore or in the country is viable, why not relocate to Taiwan's Hsinchu Park or Scotland's Silicon Glen for the same reason? The location of a country, firm, or individual should be irrelevant. In such a decentralized world, the logic goes, any country with a vision and good credit should be able to build its own Silicon Valley. It is a Horatio Alger story for the world's margins, updated for the late 1990s.

But it is not a story without irony. Distance may cease to matter, but innovation still loves company. Thanks to new communications technology, developing countries such as Mexico and Malaysia as well as more prosperous, industrial nations such as England, Germany, and Israel are all developing regional information-based economies. Yet even as their governments herald the death of distance and the opportunities it affords them, they are betting millions, even billions of dollars—not to mention political credibility—on the power of local communities to attract the world's top scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs. These clusters are billed in parliaments and the press around the world as panaceas for a stunning variety of economic and political ills.

From Seoul to Cape Town, governments are trying to build Silicon Valleys from the ground up by replicating the history of Silicon Valley itself. The first signs of the modern Silicon Valley began to emerge in the late 1940s, before communications technology gave scientists any option but close working quarters. Naturally, all research occurred in the shadow of a premier university. By the time the Americans entered World War II, two new electronics firms had spun off of Stanford research projects—Varian Associates and Hewlett–Packard. During World War II, defense contractors followed suit, clustering just north of the university. Stanford, meanwhile, began to encourage high-tech firms to relocate to the region and poured federal funds into its electrical engineering department. In 1946, the university founded the Stanford Research Institute to encourage research cooperation with private industry. From this modest beginning, Silicon Valley has exploded into a vast technopolis employing more than two hundred thousand people in seven

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thousand high-tech firms and drawing, as of last year, a quarter of every venture capital dollar in the United States.[8]

With a few modifications to size and scope, countries are still aspiring to the same approximate model. The world's fledgling information economies revolve around similar clusters of universities, research labs, and, if all goes according to plans, dozens of IT start-ups and foreign multinationals. Sociologist Manuel Castells explains:

> The development of the information technology revolution contributed to the formation of the milieux of innovation where discoveries and applications would interact, and be tested, in a recurrent process of trial and error, of learning by doing; these milieus required (and still do in the 1990s, in spite of on-line networking) spatial concentrations of research centers, higher education institutions, advanced technology companies, a network of ancillary suppliers of goods and services, and business networks of venture capital to finance start-ups.[9]

Universities play a number of critical roles in this environment. Their faculty educates a country's domestic workforce and attracts foreign expertise. Their stature draws all-important venture capital into the region. And in thriving clusters, universities maintain partnerships with both start-ups and multinationals, collecting corporate grants, investing back in private research and product development, providing continuing education, maintaining valuable public goods such as supercomputers and high-tech labs, and contributing to the intellectual give and take that drives innovation and propels ideas from the white board to the market. Nearly half of Germany's new technology firms formed between 1983 and 1996 were spin-offs from university research. Glasgow, Strathclyde, Edinburgh, and Heriott–Watt universities are principal partners in Scotland's acclaimed new Alba Project, launched in late 1997 to nurture a more lucrative, innovation-based economy in a country that builds two out of every five brand-name computers sold in Europe. South Korea's Ministry of Science and Technology turned over responsibility for forming an IT cluster in Korea to the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. Israel's thriving young high-tech sector is anchored by one of the finest university systems in the

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world. And, not to be left out, Mahathir has opted to build a new university to complement Malaysia's new MSC.

Once a cluster reaches a certain critical mass of expertise, capital, and infrastructure, it becomes relatively self-perpetuating, attracting skilled labor and firms from around the world who contribute to a continual process of upgrading and rejuvenation through local competition and informal collaboration—what Annalee Saxenian calls a "network system." As Michael Porter explains, "Compared with market transactions among dispersed and random buyers and sellers, the proximity of companies and institutions in one location—and the repeated exchanges among them—fosters better coordination and trust."[10]

More than any other quality, the growing number of clusters in the silicon archipelago are intended to replicate Silicon Valley's record of innovation. Although it is still somewhat early to judge, few IT clusters have shown signs that they are capable of initiating the kind of innovation that so many governments expect.

## INNOVATION ENVY

Sabeer Bhatia grew up in Bangalore. He came to the United States in 1988 armed with a scholarship to the California Institute of Technology and stayed for a graduate degree at Stanford. At the age of twenty-six, he left his job as an engineer at a small start-up to launch another start-up—a free, web-based e-mail service. In less than three years he signed up 25 million subscribers and made his company, Hotmail, a household name. In 1997, he sold Hotmail to Microsoft for $400 million.

Bhatia's native Bangalore claims one of the highest concentrations of programmers in the world but few such stories. Even though Indian universities place twice as many programmers and engineers into the workforce as the United States, high technology accounts for only about 10 percent of the country's manufacturing exports, compared with 44 percent in the United States and 39 percent in Japan. India lacks the domestic market for big ideas that drives innovation and draws venture capital in Silicon Valley. As Bhatia told *Wired*, "Only in Silicon Valley

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could two 27-year-old guys get $300,000 from men they had just met. . . . We didn't even have a prototype or a dummied graphical interface. I just sketched on his whiteboard."[11]

Aspiring high-tech countries have seen the benefits of an innovation-driven economy and want their share. One lab in Silicon Valley, Xerox's famous Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), has provided hundreds of firms directly and indirectly with billions of dollars' worth of ideas, such as client/server architecture, the mouse, Ethernet, object-oriented programming, graphical user interfaces, and laser printing, to name just a few. In the United States, where salaries are high to begin with, workers in the IT sector average wages 60 percent higher than those in other private-sector industries—$46,000 a year compared with $28,000. The American IT industry has contributed over a third of the real domestic product growth in the United States over the last three years.[12] A quick survey of Silicon Valley's contribution to NASDAQ and the New York Stock Exchange reveals gaudy returns that nevertheless may seem eerily attainable to developing countries. Companies like Hotmail that start tiny, stay relatively small, and ship no products generate staggering revenue. America Online, only ten thousand employees strong, is valued by Wall Street at $66.4 billion, $14 billion more than General Motors.

If estimates are correct and 350 million people are on line five years from now, that would mean a vast and affluent population pointing and clicking their way through what is coming to be known as the "New Economy."[13] For the world's IT leaders, this economy is generating new money—lots of it. In 1997, American PC manufacturer Dell sold $3 million worth of computers a day on its web site. San Jose–based Cisco Systems raked in over $3 billion worth of e-commerce in the same year. The industry can anticipate steadily increasing international demand for a vast array of IT products: hardware, from sleek subnotebooks to cheap, Internet-ready desktops; software, whether desktop publishing suites or web-based games; and services, like technical support, on-line trading, perhaps even privacy. Worldwide spending on computer technology is expected to reach $3 trillion by the end of the decade.

Governments on the political and high-tech fringe are counting on their technology clusters to decentralize the global IT

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industry and spread the wealth of the information age a little more evenly. They do have some cause to be optimistic. American high-tech companies already successfully collaborate on line with foreign offices and partners as well as remote workforces. For instance, body shops, firms that specialize in "offsourcing" programming jobs from overseas to India, are abundant. An average Indian programmer earns as little as $10,000 per year. An entry-level programmer may demand only $2,000. Connected by the Internet, programmers in Bangalore, India, and San Jose, California, can cooperate on projects in a virtual environment where technology has overcome not only distance but time. With a team of programmers in San Jose and another team thirteen hours ahead in Bangalore, even a small Silicon Valley firm can operate twenty-four hours a day and control costs at the same time. Multinational Y2K shops debug systems around the clock. Technical-support teams service requests over e-mail while American clients sleep.[14]

Offsourcing, however, is just an information-age euphemism for outsourcing heavy lifting to countries where the muscle is cheap. Russia, India, the Philippines, and perhaps a dozen other countries provide American firms with programmers who make a decent living working for change on the Silicon Valley dollar. A full 60 percent of India's high-tech export revenue is brought in by providing cheap programming for foreign companies. The Indian government insists it will make information technology its primary export by the year 2000. But for all of its high-tech expertise, India exports few recognizable products.

"Firms create competitive advantage," Porter explains, "by perceiving or discovering new and better ways to compete in an industry and bringing them to market."[15] Such innovation remains the province of traditional centers and the talent they attract. Excluding Taiwan's Acer, almost all of the world's recognizable computer brands are produced by either American or Japanese firms, first out of the consumer electronics gate and still well in the lead. And although two-thirds of the world's programmers live outside the United States, American companies maintain a two-thirds global market share in software. In fact, nine of the world's top ten software companies are American. Only Germany's SAP, fourth on the list, has crashed the

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American software party—and one out of every five SAP employees is U.S.–based.

For governments betting on an information-age reversal of fortune, the stakes are high, both economically and politically. The drive to innovate in the high-tech world is about more than money. At a time when countries are increasingly measuring their might in economic terms, being a high-tech nation today is not entirely unlike being a nuclear nation during the Cold War.[16] To have a vibrant information-technology industry is to be part of an exclusive club, with all the political cachet that membership entails. Furthermore, increasing global integration has accelerated the volume of entertainment products like film, television, and music that cross borders and permeate national culture. Many countries have bristled at what they view as cultural hegemony on the part of a few economic powers (principally the United States), even as their citizens latch on to the latest trends from abroad. Information technology has already shown a similar capability to spread culture and language. Over 80 percent of the world's web sites are in English, even though over 40 percent of Internet users speak another language in the home.[17] And video games from Japan have created a market among culturally insular American youth for Japanese cartoons, or *animé*, as well as homegrown imitations. Countries typically on the receiving end of "global" culture may see an opportunity to achieve more equal footing—and perhaps to protect some of their own culture in the process.

Nevertheless, for most countries pursuing high-tech clusters, these motives pale in comparison with one overriding one. Cluster contenders like Malaysia, Taiwan, and India, which have long based their economy on providing cheap labor for the developed world, may lose work in the future to even cheaper labor in countries like Cambodia or Vietnam. Those newly industrialized countries have a chance to move forward or backward on the development continuum based in large part on the success of their information economies. And competition will be fierce. Asia claims the world's fastest growing market for computers and software. But Singapore, Malaysia, India, the Philippines, South Korea, and China will all have to compete with Taiwan's relatively successful Hsinchu Park and

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more established industries in Australia and Japan. Meanwhile, the traditional route to development may become increasingly difficult to navigate without running afoul of international norms. If the world continues to achieve consensus on issues like pollution and public health standards, developing countries will be pressured by the international community to find a greener route to industrialization than their developed predecessors.

Some analysts have suggested that information technology provides a shortcut to the developed world that allows developing countries to "leapfrog" over many stages of industrialization. Mahathir claims the MSC will make Malaysia a fully developed country by the year 2020. Vice President Al Gore recently suggested that "by the year 2010, we can triple the number of people who can support their families because they can reach world markets through the Internet."[18]

The world has come to expect a great deal from information technology—in the case of most IT clusters, probably too much.

## LIVING UP TO EXPECTATIONS

No formula can ensure that a new IT cluster will take off, despite widespread enthusiasm for anything that resembles Silicon Valley. But most analysts agree that a certain number of common factors must be in place for a cluster to flourish. In 1990, Porter proposed four "determinants of national advantage," which, as he notes in his more recent writing, work equally well to explain the success or failure of regional economies.[19] "Factor conditions," a cluster or nation's supply of skilled labor and quality of infrastructure, vary widely among the clusters in the silicon archipelago. "Demand conditions" have a tremendous bearing on a cluster's responsiveness to the market. "Related and supporting industries" range from market research and public relations agencies to law firms specializing in trade and intellectual property law. And "firm strategy, structure, and rivalry" is highly significant, as the much-emulated horizontal network of specialty suppliers, multinational corporations, and start-ups in Silicon Valley illustrates. A cluster's strength or weakness in these four areas can provide a reasonably good indicator of its health.[20]

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A flourishing IT cluster is not likely to be built from scratch. If a new cluster is to have any chance of producing firms capable of innovating and bringing products to market, it must have at least some built-in advantages, whether access to an educated citizenry or proximity to buyers. It is unlikely that any would-be IT cluster will have deep resources in all four of the areas that Porter describes. But government policies and investment can do much to encourage (or discourage) development in one or more of them. Although few countries share exactly the same set of advantages and handicaps, in the course of championing an emerging cluster in the silicon archipelago many governments are facing similar practical and political challenges.

*Inadequate Communications Infrastructure*

Any would-be high-tech cluster must first prove it has the communications infrastructure to connect local IT firms to each other and to the rest of the world. Advances in fiber optics have allowed the developed world to increase the capacity and speed of the Internet and cut consumer costs at the same time. Reliable telephone networks and fast access to additional lines are taken for granted. Countries like Israel and Ireland have all the infrastructure they need, a fact reflected by their early high-tech success (Ireland, for instance, is currently the world's second-largest software exporter). But the International Telecommunications Union estimates that over 43 million people worldwide are currently waiting for a telephone line, and most of them will wait more than a year. Many countries with aspiring clusters are contributing to this disheartening number.

In the past, a telecommunications base was prohibitively expensive for many countries to achieve on a national scale. Building mainline-based infrastructure, even forgoing fiber optics, can be costly and time consuming for states with little or no existing base. But countries on the high-tech fringe will profit in the next ten years from the expansion of wireless communications.

Many countries with weak or emerging economies are now abandoning mainline-based local service almost entirely in favor of wireless local loop, a comparatively cheap network of

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radio towers that provides wireless local phone service. Development experts sometimes focus on the promise of wireless local-loop service for predominantly rural and underdeveloped regions like sub-Saharan Africa, where the population is dispersed and telecom infrastructure is nonexistent (only one in three hundred people has a telephone, and the wait for a new line can be as long as ten years).[21] But the real promise of wireless technology is for urban centers, where a large number of people are within range of a few towers. In many cities, communications capacity is running far behind demand. Qualcomm announced plans last year to bring wireless local loop to the Wukesong area of Beijing as a trial for possible wider deployment. Prague has gone wireless to increase its capacity without digging up its famous cobblestone streets. And Sao Paulo's new wireless service drew over a million subscribers in a matter of months.[22] A UN study predicts that over 50 percent of all local telephone service in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia will be carried over wireless local loop by early in the next decade.

The next stage of wireless deployment, and still very much a wild card, is at the global level. Motorola's Iridium project and wireless pioneer Craig McCaw's Teledesic are betting several billion dollars that there is a market for fast, interactive satellite communications. Iridium, a network of sixty-six low earth–orbit (LEO) satellites that went on line last fall, promises subscribers a cellular phone that never goes out of range. Of course, such connectivity comes at a price. The phone itself costs $3,000, and per-minute rates range from $5 to $10, on average. Teledesic, still several years away from deployment, is more ambitious. With a proposed network of 288 LEO satellites, Teledesic bills itself as an "Internet in the sky." Microsoft, AT&T, Boeing, and Motorola are among the project's high-profile backers. Teledesic subscribers will have wireless, lightning fast, fully interactive access to a broadband network capable of transmitting bandwidth-hungry data like video and telephony at a rate of 50 megabytes per second—several hundred times faster than today's industry-standard ISDN connection. No longer held back by uneven telecom infrastructure, users will be able to access Teledesic from the steppes of

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Kazakhstan as easily as from Amsterdam. It remains to be seen what access will cost, and whether anyone will be able to afford it. But it is easy to understand why leaders in the developing world might go to sleep at night dreaming of the possibilities. It was primarily the developing world's support for the project (and aggressive lobbying) that rushed Teledesic's license application through the UN in mere months, despite doubts about the project's viability and the $9 billion price tag.

In the end, telecommunications infrastructure may be expensive, but it will not be the insurmountable obstacle to IT clusters that it might have been in the past. Wireless technology will not be a panacea, but it will supplement existing and new mainline infrastructure. A primary appeal of clusters to nations with weak infrastructure is that, realistically, governments need only develop a small corner of the country for it to be economically viable. China, for example, had only 45 telephone mainlines for every 1,000 people as of 1996. Hong Kong had 547. A dense concentration of phone lines in a small area can plug local firms into the global market. And wireless local loop will meet regional communications needs and reduce the overall number of mainlines a country has to deploy.

It is still too early to predict the ramifications of LEO satellite networks like Iridium or Teledesic, or rival platforms like the airship-based Sky Station, but from the standpoint of emerging high-tech clusters they can only be for the good. A small Swiss firm, the Fantastic Corporation, recently announced a partnership with Loral Space and Communications to deploy its own broadband satellite network. As competition develops and technologies improve, all-important connection prices will fall and usage will increase.

### *Lack of Credibility*

All indications suggest that communications infrastructure will continue to fade as an obstacle to emerging clusters. A more significant challenge will be convincing the world that a country deserves a place among the high-tech elite. Clusters in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, Southeast Asia, and Latin America must overcome the stigma of years of underdevelopment and recent financial crises. Developing countries

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in general are widely perceived as lax in protecting intellectual-property rights, a fundamental requirement for innovation to flourish.[23] Even Western Europe suffers from a lack of IT credibility, with a reputation for weak venture-capital markets, a risk-averse business climate, excessive vertical integration, and a high-tech culture that lags far behind the United States and Japan.

Many countries are launching aggressive public-relations campaigns. Most high-tech firms and potential investors will visit Malaysia's MSC for the first time on the Internet. The promotional site features an interactive map of future MSC facilities, with construction updates and a photo gallery. For a different kind of presentation, visitors can opt for a first-person "fly through." A two-minute-long computer animation sends you gliding above and around a computer-rendered model of the MSC, past research labs, office complexes, the new university, even a park with a man-made lake. As you float along, a pleasant female voice with a mild British accent rhapsodizes about the MSC's state-of-the-art facilities. Cyberjaya, the heart of the MSC, receives the most attention: "Malaysia's first cybercity in the multimedia supercorridor," a "futuristic and intelligent city," and, in case its credentials are still in doubt, a "strident vision of a future city." Malaysia has no intention of becoming a high-tech sweatshop. With the MSC, the narrator explains, Malaysians will "reach out to next generation technology in the information age and make it their own."[24]

Singapore, perhaps pressed by its proximity to the MSC and the bombastic Mahathir, has matched Malaysia's marketing efforts almost step for step. In 1991, before Mahathir could even look up at the Petronas Towers, Singapore released its "Vision of an Intelligent Island" plan, or IT2000. Singapore intends to transform the entire (albeit tiny) country into a high-tech magnet. Technology, the report suggests, will change more than Singapore's IT industry or even its business climate. It will change lifestyle. Like the MSC, Singapore's plan does not skimp on futurism. A press release accompanying the report, entitled "A Day in the Life of the Intelligent Island," describes how a fictional family, the Tays, would live in Singapore's future networked society. Mr. Tay, a tailor, displays clothes for a

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customer on a wall monitor. Mrs. Tay, an insurance agent, works from home, shops for groceries, and plays mah-jongg with her friends all over the national network.[25] The Singapore government has billed the country as an ideal hub for serving e-commerce orders from Asia. As Mah Bow Tan, minister of communications, explained to the Associated Press, "Until we see a breakthrough in teleportation, you still need a place where planes can fly from . . . [and] boxes can be delivered."[26] And the National Computer Board, the agency overseeing the project, is quick to point out that the World Competitiveness Report has "placed Singapore among the top ten nations in the world in terms of strategic exploitation of IT by companies, computer literacy of workers, and telecommunications infrastructure."[27]

Developing and newly industrialized countries are going to have difficulty convincing the world that they are capable of offering more than cheap land and cheap labor. Eventually, a few countries will shed this stigma. In the meantime, the over-the-top futurism of Malaysia's MSC and Singapore's IT2000 is relatively convincing—so long as sweeping vision is backed up by deep pockets and careful politics.

### *Domestic Politics*

Countries looking to ride their clusters into the ranks of the high-tech elite are having to make tough political choices in order to preserve a favorable domestic climate for innovation and foreign investment. Foreign researchers and entrepreneurs, particularly those from the West, expect uncensored Internet access, minimal barriers to trade, a business environment free from excessive government interference, and high ceilings on the number of foreign knowledge workers a firm may hire.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore has overseen a period of phenomenal economic growth with a strong, centralized state and a strictly enforced code of values. But neither the strong state nor the rigorous moral code are particularly conducive to attracting Western high-tech firms. The prime minister, for instance, is emphatic that Internet access in his country will always be limited by the state. Although a censored Internet poses few real problems for high-tech companies, the idea of

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state controls will be daunting for many potential investors, particularly small firms. A restricted Internet today should cause potential investors to worry about what further restrictions might be imposed in the future.

Malaysia took a different course initially but has encountered similar problems of late. Unlike Singapore, Malaysia announced that tenants in the MSC would have unrestricted Internet access and be allowed work visas for an unlimited number of foreign knowledge workers. Malaysia seemed to be the anti-Singapore, a government willing to open its borders to globalization and soften the traditionally strong role of the state for the sake of economic growth. Political and economic liberalization, coupled with foreigner-friendly priorities and a $20 billion investment in high-tech infrastructure, seemed a recipe for high-tech success in southeast Asia. But the Asian economic crisis hit Malaysia hard. Mahathir seemed none too liberal as he railed against billionaire speculator George Soros in the American press for his role in sinking the ringgit, blamed the Asian flu on a Zionist conspiracy, and beefed up the state's role in the private sector. Then, last fall, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim landed in jail on charges of sodomy and corruption. When pictures of a bruised and beaten Anwar surfaced in the world press, potential investors took notice. The scandal was ugly and vulgar and bore all the signs of a political railroading.

Domestic political problems dog many new high-tech clusters. Guadalajara must regain investor confidence, which was shaken after the peso crisis of 1994. Over half of all managers in Russia's science parks find extortion to be a common occurrence, whether by government officials or by organized crime. Both Taiwan and Hong Kong will change as Beijing does; China may claim the world's most important high-tech market within a decade, but two years after President Ziang Zemin's election, few seem to know for sure how the country's political climate will evolve. Japan's astronomical cost of living, decade-long recession, graying population, and preferential trade practices have teamed up to damage Japan's credibility abroad as an economic model, even as it remains one of the world's IT leaders. And the overcrowding and wide wage disparities cre-

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ated in Bangalore by the high-tech industry have sparked regular protests, frequently targeting foreign multinationals.

Many countries hoping to profit from new technology will face a moment of reckoning. Once a country opens its borders to freer trade and information, it is difficult to go back. Americanization or regional homogenization can sometimes follow economic integration, and freer flows of information tend to prompt political liberalization, whether a country intends it or not—limiting control over information is one of the great political tools of an authoritarian or semiauthoritarian state. For those countries where the IT industry yields early returns, liberalization will probably proceed apace. Those countries that choose not to risk the consequences of unabated globalization will quickly fall out of the running.

*Flight Instinct*

Assuming a government maintains an ideal political climate for an innovative and profitable high-tech cluster, it still may not be able to hold on to its start-ups once they produce a viable product. Unless a firm is based in a country with a huge high-tech market, such as the United States, China, or Japan, it must export to survive. Outside of government contracts, a Malaysian firm can hardly expect to profit from its tiny domestic market—particularly in the face of foreign competition. A South African or Taiwanese firm will not fare much better. Even India has a notoriously weak domestic IT market. Although India is renowned for producing more English-speaking programmers and engineers than anywhere else in the world, for every two thousand people in the country, there are a mere three computers.[28]

Some firms export successfully from small or medium-sized markets. Eighty-one percent of Walldorf-based SAP's revenues in 1997 came from outside Germany. However, the German software giant maintains offices in fifty countries and is now listed on both the New York and Frankfurt stock exchanges so that company recruiters can offer more enticing stock options to top American programmers and engineers. SAP's high number of American workers is credited with its success in an almost impenetrable U.S. software market. CEO Hasso Plattner

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explained his winning strategy to *Red Herring*: "Technology companies that wish to expand internationally have to think like missionaries and first establish small advance groups to learn the language, business climate, and culture. You cannot just arrive and preach about your product. You have to give each subsidiary the freedom to establish a local identity."[29] Apple has also pursued a "multi-local" strategy, establishing design centers at its production sites in Europe and Asia in order to be more responsive to the needs of those markets.[30] These research and development outposts, or "home-base augmenting sites," as Harvard Business School professor Walter Kuemmerle usefully categorizes them, absorb new knowledge "through participation in formal or informal meeting circles that exist within a geographic area containing useful knowledge (a knowledge cluster), through hiring employees from competitors, or through sourcing laboratory equipment and research services from the same suppliers that competitors use."[31]

Start-up firms in emerging clusters, however, are not going to have the resources of SAP or Apple. Many firms will find it easier to relocate to a large foreign market. Communications technology, it seems, has yet to replicate the word-of-mouth culture that drives and passes along consumer preferences. As Koh Eng-kiat, CEO of a start-up that moved from Singapore to California in 1996, told the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "Here, we know what's hot and what's hip." Koh believes he came to the United States just in time. "If you're not in this market, you run the risk of developing the wrong things," he explained. "We were lucky. Most Asian companies who arrive here with a canned product don't survive."[32] Perhaps even more important, however, is the insight that savvy buyers in an influential market like the United States give firms on future global demand. As Porter notes, "Proximity, both physical and cultural, to these buyers helps a nation's firms perceive new needs. It also allows close contact in the development process and, when buyers are companies, creates opportunities to engage in joint development work in ways that are difficult for foreign firms to match."[33]

Proximity to the center of a major market also allows firms to bring products to market much faster then they could in an

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emerging cluster—even elsewhere in the United States. A study conducted by Claudia Bird Schoonhoven and Kathleen Eisenhardt found that the average Silicon Valley start-up is able to develop a working prototype of its first product within 12.4 months, compared with over 20 months in the rest of the country. And its product reaches the market after an average of 17.5 months, compared with 25 months elsewhere in the United States.[34] A firm in a cluster like Silicon Valley is part of a vast and dynamic network of suppliers and technicians. It has the luxury of outsourcing components and recruiting personnel locally. Furthermore, Silicon Valley real estate means proximity to the necessary venture capital from local investment firms and major high-tech corporations (which frequently invest in start-ups as both a form of research and development and a quick dose of entrepreneurial spirit). In an industry where new technology is perpetually on the verge of obsolescence, firms must recognize demand, secure capital, and bring a product to market quickly or else be beaten by a competitor. Technology pundit Esther Dyson explains, "As information flows faster and as innovations are easier to copy and implement, the ability to keep innovating consistently (or to acquire people who can) and time-to-market will provide primary competitive advantage."[35]

Clusters that lose fewer start-ups to migration, such as those in Ireland or Israel, can lose them to foreign buyers. Kodak, America Online, Cisco Systems, and Lucent Technologies have all acquired Israeli companies, many of them start-ups, in a rush of deals worth over $2 billion since 1996. Many analysts now worry that fledgling Israeli firms are prematurely seeking the big payoffs of blockbuster acquisitions rather than concentrating on developing any kind of long-term strategy for their products. Israel could become the world's R&D discount store, but it could also do much better. In fact, the *Economist* recently dubbed the country California's most likely rival, citing a "close-knit society that networks ceaselessly, deals daily with risk, reveres learning, and is blessed with a torrent of well-educated immigrants from the former Soviet Union."[36] But if the fire sales continue, they will hamstring an Israeli IT industry that seems almost certain to mature and thrive.

Governments may try to encourage firms to stay, but they recognize that they can only do so much. Protectionism will

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scare off foreign investors and encourage start-ups to leave sooner rather than later. Besides, countries benefit when their domestic companies are acquired. The sale of one Israeli firm—Mirabilis, the maker of popular ICQ messaging software—brought in almost $150 million in tax revenue last year. And Koh's firm, New Alloy, opened an office in Singapore two years after it left as an antidote to the crunch for software engineers in Silicon Valley.

*The Scramble for Skilled Labor*

Skilled labor must be the engine of any innovation-driven economy. Yet skilled labor is in short supply in all but a few corners of the world. The scramble for the world's high-tech talent is going to hamper emerging clusters severely in the short to medium term. Europe has a rich scientific tradition, and northern Europe claims some of the highest levels of Internet penetration and technological expertise in the world. Yet according to a recent European Commission report, over 1 million high-tech jobs in Europe will be vacant as early as 2002 due to a shortage of skilled workers. Today, while unemployment nears 20 percent in some European countries, half a million high-tech jobs are unfilled. Israel too boasts a highly educated citizenry, world-renowned universities, and an even denser concentration of scientists and engineers. Yet its high-tech sector suffers from a chronic lack of managers and technicians. The situation is much more dire elsewhere. Critics worry that plans for a paperless government at Malaysia's future capitol, Putrajaya (still under construction), may be derailed by a shortage of workers with even basic computer competency. And in the United States, the world's most lucrative IT market, one in ten high-tech job openings remains permanently vacant.

Years ago, analysts thought India might become the world's reservoir of high-tech labor. But few could have predicted the way the industry would grow in the 1990s. Nor did they anticipate its hunger for youth. Recent college graduates are coveted for their up-to-the-minute education, and many new Internet companies are launched by innovators in their twenties. Until demand for IT products and services slows down, which is unlikely, clusters are going to have to compete on a global scale for scarce talent.

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Governments are seeking to shore up their national workforce before that workforce is even out of grade school. Public opinion polls in the United States perennially rank inadequate primary and secondary education as one of the greatest sources of national anxiety. Similar anxiety is apparent around the world, even in countries that, unlike the United States, traditionally score in the upper percentiles of standardized tests like the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS).

Competition picks up substantially at the university level. The developing world still suffers from a severe brain drain that begins with inadequate national universities. The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) are regarded as a developing world success story, and with good reason. They have sealed profitable partnerships with local industry and enjoy a growing international reputation. Microsoft CEO Bill Gates endowed a chair in Delhi. But one in five IIT graduates leave the country to pursue further study in the United States or England, and few return. The United States enjoys the opposite effect. Premier research universities poach talented students from abroad, many of whom take advantage of the close ties between top schools and private industry to pursue jobs in the United States. Indeed, about 10 percent of Microsoft's employees are Indian.[37]

Universities outside the United States are fighting back, with limited success. Malaysia recently stopped offering grants to students who wish to study abroad in the United Kingdom or the United States. At the same time, Malaysia announced a dramatic increase in the number of classes national universities would conduct in English and an increase in state-funded grants to attract visiting researchers. Malaysian reformers hope this policy shift will draw high-quality foreign faculty and research into the county, even if only on a rotating basis, and reduce the number of Malaysian students that leave. Elsewhere, universities are establishing formal relationships with American partner schools. The University of Singapore, for instance, offers prospective students both the convenience and economy of a local education and the prestige of affiliation with the Wharton School of Business.

The fight for talented graduates as they enter the workforce takes on an almost surreal quality. Big American corporations

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like Microsoft send recruiters to universities around the world in search of talent. These company representatives come armed with stock options, $20,000 signing bonuses, and higher salaries than a twenty-three-year-old could ever hope to earn in Russia or the Philippines. At a training session in Holland, Microsoft representatives reportedly hired bouncers to fend off other recruiters.[38] Of course, not all firms can afford to send headhunters around the world. They rely on private recruiting firms, which scour the globe for skilled labor, pulling in hundreds of millions of dollars in finders' fees. It is also common for firms in Silicon Valley to offer generous commissions to employees who successfully refer a programmer or engineer.

Israel has probably attracted the most skilled labor of any new IT hub, albeit due to a unique political moment. Unlike many aspiring clusters, Israel claims a highly educated public, outstanding universities, and an indigenous IT industry. In the waning years of Soviet communism, Israel was suddenly faced with a massive influx of highly skilled Russian immigrants. In order to capitalize on this unexpected new resource, the government launched a network of twenty-seven incubators, high-tech complexes designed to help both immigrants and native Israelis collaborate and commercialize innovations with federal venture capital—up to $280,000 over two years per project (the government retains a 20 percent share). Immigrants were also given training in Hebrew and English and exposed to Israeli methodology and equipment. As of 1996, 58 percent of the start-ups launched in the incubator program were still in operation, joined by a healthy high-tech industry funded by traditional, private capital.[39]

Even for Israel, however, it will be difficult to fight traditional clusters in the skilled labor scramble, particularly as the flow of immigrants has slowed. The United States is showing signs that it might increase the quota of knowledge workers granted visas, currently capped at 115,000—good news for America's IT industry, bad news for the rest of the world. Meanwhile, California firms looking to escape the crowding and high cost of living in Silicon Valley are putting down roots just north of San Francisco in San Mateo County, where a vibrant high-tech community is emerging. If Europe reforms the

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venture capital and taxation policies that have hobbled its development of a high-tech sector, it may begin to stem its current drain of skilled labor to the United States and attract knowledge workers from around the world. The region surrounding Cambridge University boasts the densest concentration of high-tech expertise in Europe, with twelve hundred IT or IT–related firms employing thirty-eight thousand people. And both Ireland and Scotland are earning international recognition as promising IT hubs. In Asia, Japan's Nihon Net Research and China's Internet Research Foundation announced plans last December to share resources and develop a joint regional strategy. If initial cooperation goes well, they hope to form an Asian Internet Research Foundation to challenge the United States in the Asian market. A successful, if informal, high-tech partnership between China and Japan could limit the potential of the Asian market for clusters in the Philippines or Taiwan.

## GOING LOCAL

Fifty years ago, before anyone had heard of Silicon Valley, the high-tech capital of the United States was located just outside of Boston, along Route 128. Over the course of a generation, the industry shifted dramatically to the West Coast. It is possible to imagine another shift, only this time a transnational one. Researchers in an emerging cluster might discover a breakthrough new technology or underserved segment of the global IT market. More likely, Silicon Valley will remain on top for the foreseeable future, and new hubs will emerge as the global market expands.

Prevailing wisdom suggests that if new clusters are viable, they are viable because location matters much less than it used to. But, ironically, if today's new IT clusters are any indication, it is possible that the nations most apt to attract and keep innovators may be the ones that can take advantage of location and local identity.

Perhaps the most important determinant will be national and local culture. Porter sums it up well: "The mere presence of firms, suppliers, and institutions in a location creates the potential for economic value, but it does not necessarily ensure the

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realization of this potential. Social glue binds clusters together, contributing to the value creation process."[40]

Consider the case of Silicon Valley. Dyson remarks:

> Many foreign people, and especially foreign governments, visit Silicon Valley in the hopes that some of the Valley's fecundity will rub off on them. Often, they look at the wrong features, focusing just on high-tech rather than on the culture that makes the companies thrive. . . . What they may be missing is the entrepreneurial spirit and the cross fertilization as companies start, merge, break up, and unleash second- and third-time entrepreneurs into the mix.[41]

These qualities all contributed to the relative decline of Route 128 and the westward migration of America's high-tech elite. Berkeley professor Annalee Saxenian points out that New England values tend to stigmatize bankruptcy and entrepreneurial failure. A strong predisposition toward company loyalty has discouraged the "creative destruction" responsible for so many successful high-tech firms in California. And a business culture that encourages a fortress-like mentality within firms precludes the informal cooperation among competitors that Silicon Valley has shown to be such an effective catalyst for high-tech innovation.[42]

Similar disparities exist throughout the silicon archipelago. Porter cites a number of important cultural variables that change from country to country, including "attitude toward authority, norms of interpersonal interaction, attitudes of workers toward management and vice versa, social norms of individualistic or group behavior, and professional standards."[43] Analysts have cited a predisposition toward rigid company loyalty and excessive vertical integration as a handicap to high-tech industry in Bangalore and throughout much of Europe, as well as a culture that values a steady job over a high-risk start-up. And European clusters are widely criticized for their lack of entrepreneurial spirit. By comparison, the *Economist* praised Israel's vibrant high-tech industry for its "chutzpah." Government regulation can encourage or discourage certain values—national attitudes toward entrepreneurship, for example, are in part a reflection of the way a country's laws treat bankruptcy. But favorable culture will remain a critical regional advantage.

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Emerging clusters will also leverage their proximity to important markets. Despite the large English-speaking population in the Philippines and the benevolent futurism of Singapore, proximity to China and relations with the government in Beijing may determine the success or failure of new Asian IT clusters more than any other factor. Hong Kong's Founder Group has already showed the potential for Asian innovators to make a killing in China. Its desktop-publishing software trounced industry leaders like QuarkXPress on the way to an 80 percent market share simply by managing Chinese characters better than Western alternatives. At the same time, China is notoriously difficult for foreign firms to navigate, given severe trade restrictions, a strictly controlled Internet (substantial e-commerce is years away at best), and, for the West, a considerable language barrier. Western software companies would do well to follow SAP's example and establish a regional presence, absorbing the business culture and learning how to develop a nuanced Chinese product. Southeast Asia's collection of clusters could provide a business-friendly staging ground and would no doubt profit from an influx of foreign firms looking to build a creative presence in the region rather than ship boxes and service e-commerce orders. Similar regional advantages may develop elsewhere on a smaller scale as markets ebb and flow.

Finally, countries may also find that they are able to take advantage of one of the global era's more profound and unexpected consequences: the resurgence of local social, linguistic, and ethnic identities. This trend probably represents an anxious response to new forces that are both more distant and more difficult to comprehend than the familiar tandem of local and national government. Castells provides a practical example to explain the rise of smaller communities as a response to a changing distribution of power: "Citizens of a given European region will have a better chance of defending their interests if they support their regional authorities against their national government in alliance with the European Union. Or the other way around. Or else, none of the above; that is, by affirming local/regional autonomy against both the nation-state and supranational institutions."[44] Indeed, sociologist Liah Greenfeld has explained the nineteenth-century origins of national iden-

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tity as a vehicle for "status-maintenance."[45] It should not be surprising that similar anxiety would provoke a similar psychological response among so many.

Job recruiters are increasingly appealing to these identities to lure talent from abroad. Governments with large and educated diasporas may try to realign common identity groups spanning across continents—localization, facilitated by the death of distance. It is, at the very least, another benefit firms can offer as they scrap for scarce technicians, managers, and researchers. In an attempt to shore up the chronic labor shortage in Israel's robust IT sector, many Israeli firms have targeted American Jews in the high-tech industry in their recruitment efforts. Indian recruiters have admitted similar tactics, appealing to family and community values to try and keep young workers from leaving the country—or to try to lure émigrés back. Ireland, another high-tech success story, may increasingly appeal to a population of self-proclaimed Irish Americans many times larger than Ireland's population. China may one day be able to offer similar incentives. In each of these cases, local identities spanning vast distances could shift the geography of IT innovation.

Governments expecting economic miracles from their IT clusters will probably be disappointed. However, many clusters will provide modest benefits, creating jobs and encouraging higher levels of education. High hopes are not likely to abate. A select few countries will realize the promise of the information age, assembling new local networks of innovators and claiming their corner of a lucrative global market. Ironically, it may be because they were in the right place at the right time.

ENDNOTES

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[3]John Rielly, "America and the World: A Survey at Century's End," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1999): 110.

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[4]*Economist* editor Frances Cairncross later expanded the survey ("The Death of Distance," *Economist*, 30 September 1995) into a broad, accessible book by the same name (below at note 6).

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[9]Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 56.

[10]Michael Porter, "Clusters and the New Economics of Competition," *Harvard Business Review* (November/December 1998).

[11]Po Bronson, "Hot Male," *Wired*, December 1998, 166–174.

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[13]A fierce controversy has emerged among economists and technology writers over the validity of the "New Economy." *Wired* editor Kevin Kelly and *Business Week* editor Stephen Shepard have been among the more vocal proponents of the idea. See Kevin Kelly, *New Rules for the New Economy* (New York: Viking, 1998); Stephen Shepard, "The New Economy: What It Really Means," *Business Week*, 17 November 1997; also Peter Leyden and Peter Schwartz, "The Long Boom: A History of the Future, 1980–2020," *Wired*, September 1997. But critics suggest that stripped of the hype, the New Economy does not look so different from the old. See J. Bradford De Long, "What 'New' Economy?" *Wilson Quarterly* (Autumn 1998); Paul Krugman, "Speed Trap: The Fuzzy Logic of the New Economy," *Slate* (18 December 1997) and "How Fast Can the U.S. Economy Grow?" *Harvard Business Review* (July/August 1997).

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[15]Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, 45.

[16]According to the most recent survey data from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 63 percent of the American public and 89 percent of American leaders believe economic strength is the most important factor in determining a country's power and influence in the world. See survey results at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/global.html> (accessed 14 April 1999).

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[42]Saxenian, *Regional Advantage*, 37.

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*Jamie Frederic Metzl*

# Popular Diplomacy

IN THE THREE HOURS between President Clinton's announcement from Martha's Vineyard that U.S. *Tomahawk* cruise missiles had struck a chemical plant in the Sudan and terrorist training sites in Afghanistan and his statement on the same subject from the White House later that evening, the Sudanese government was on the move. Launching an unexpectedly polished information offensive, the Sudanese, from embassies around the world, condemned the strikes and challenged America's assertion that the Al-Shifa plant was developing chemical weapons. With surprising speed and agility, they courted the international media, coordinated press conferences from their embassies, and issued crafted statements to the press. The Sudanese escorted foreign media to the once heavily guarded factory site. They sat journalists around tables covered with ibuprofen tablets, which they claimed the factory had produced. Sudanese women demonstrated for the international media in front of a Monica Lewinsky caricature, making the not-so-subtle suggestion that the bombing was a "Wag the Dog" attempt to divert attention from America's domestic problems.

Suddenly and unexpectedly, the United States found itself competing with the dictatorship of Sudan in a global effort to interpret the meaning of the strikes. The United States put forward its evidence of a soil sample taken from the Al-Shifa plant that demonstrated the presence of a chemical-weapons

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precursor, and described the alleged connection between the plant and the terrorist network of the Saudi exile multimillionaire Osama bin Laden. As the communications and persuasion battle developed, pitting the CIA's soil sample against the Sudanese call for an international investigation, one thing became clear: the struggle to affect important developments across the globe is increasingly an information struggle. Without winning the struggle to define the interpretation of state actions, the physical acts themselves become less effective.

The use of force obviously delivers its own message, but this message is as much symbolic as real and can be interpreted differently by different individuals and groups. Complex policy goals, even those that entail the use of force, can therefore only be realized if this broader perspective is successfully taken into account. If a desired message is not delivered, then military action cannot be maximally effective.

This realization is not new. Weaker powers have long understood that such "soft" assets as public opinion, popular perception, and legitimacy can be used against an adversary with greater "hard" military assets. The North Vietnamese, for example, actively courted international public opinion in their struggle against their better armed and wealthier American opponents in the Second Indochina War. The Bible tells us that Joshua convinced the Gibeonites that God had promised their land to the Israelites and that fighting in these circumstances was useless. The Gibeonites laid down their arms and fled.

Stronger powers have similarly understood the value of winning the information struggle. The ancient Egyptians built the massive Abu-Simbel monument to frighten the Nubians. Military leaders from Alexander the Great to Creighton Abrams have long recognized the importance of shaping public opinion to win the "hearts and minds" as part of a military strategy.

With the rapid expansion and decentralization of information systems, including the growth of the Internet, satellite television, and the sharp reduction in the costs of international communications, information assets have come to play an even greater role in defining the legitimacy of the use of force. Where might may once have made right, it now faces more challenges to its legitimacy from more diverse entities than ever before. It

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is thus not surprising that Saddam Hussein seemed almost to goad the United States and its allies into bombing after his forces violated the no-fly zone in northern Iraq. Given the asymmetrical "hard" power relationship between Iraq and the allied states, Saddam may well have wished to use such attacks in an attempt to paint the United States and Britain as the aggressors.

Of course, efforts to gain popular support or to promote popular disdain often must touch on preexisting perceptions and biases in order to be effective. Sudan's information campaign, for example, was effective in part because it reached out to a world already concerned with various expressions of American power around the globe. It was also ineffective, however, because the atrocious human-rights record of the Sudanese government had cost it much credibility in the preceding years. Nevertheless, the simple fact that a third-rate power like Sudan could quickly and single-handedly mount a polished information campaign that rivaled that of the Americans, or that the Iraqis were sophisticated enough to place foreign journalists on a hotel roof in Baghdad in such a way that a mosque would appear in the background of news reports of allied attacks, was clearly significant.

Pariah states are not the only entities who have benefited from this decentralization of information power. Smaller Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), once sideline players in world affairs, are utilizing accessible, inexpensive, and interactive communications systems to develop a level of effective coordination once only available to states, corporations, and other large organizations. One example of this phenomenon is the International Committee to Ban Land Mines (ICBL), a network of NGOs and other entities that joined together to push the land-mines issue on states, utilizing computers and other networks to energize like-minded communities around the world. The Internet allowed these individuals to gain a previously impossible coherence and to respond quickly to local developments. After the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines was ratified in 1996, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Jody Williams, a leader of the movement who had linked disparate groups around the world via computer from her home. Simi-

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larly, in the Rome negotiations leading to the development of a statute for an International Criminal Court, NGOs led a coordinated campaign to influence public opinion in target countries and pooled resources to provide free legal support to state delegations supportive of a treaty. What entities like weak states, NGOs, and others lack in economic and military resources, they make up for through their influence over information assets to shape perspectives on legitimacy. An essential and increasingly important component of this legitimacy is international public opinion.

Garnering international support is often an active process. In the Iraqi crisis of February 1998, the United States sought Arab allies to support a tough stand on Saddam after the Iraqi leader had refused to cooperate with UN inspectors. While many Arab leaders privately expressed support for the U.S. position, they were unable to take any public action because their populations were sympathetic to the Iraqis. Why? Preexisting popular distrust of the United States and its government's actions clearly was important. Additionally, however, Saddam had actively propagandized populations around the Arab world in the seven years since the end of the war with photography exhibitions and information campaigns depicting the suffering of the Iraqi people—due, the Iraqis ceaselessly argued, to the cruelty of the sanctions regime. Counterarguments against Saddam's propaganda—that Saddam had refused the international oil-for-food program and built lavish palaces while his people were starving—were not made with sufficient clarity or force and met with little success. Effectively influencing these attitudes required a more sustained, intensive, and focused effort than was the case. With the popular mood at home critical of the allied position, Arab governments had added reason to be skeptical. The range of options available to the American leadership had narrowed, and U.S. military hardware became more difficult, and politically costly, to use.

Much had changed in the seven years since the end of the Gulf War to increase the role of popular opinion in Arab politics. Information technology and the proliferation of inexpensive and accessible satellite dishes have accelerated the arrival of new sources of information to Arab populations and

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freed them from the information monopoly previously enjoyed by their leaders. Information sources of rising popularity—including the London-based *Al-Hayat* and the *al Sharq al Awsat* newspapers and, most significantly, the widely popular and often provocative Qatar-based pan-Arab satellite television network Al-Jazeera, which features daily call-in shows with opposition figures and others from around the Arab world—had inspired independent thinking that was sometimes critical of the established hierarchies.[1] Although computer, satellite, and inexpensive telephone links have not toppled dictators or changed political systems in the Arab world, they have brought new ideas and link more closely a variety of distinct populations once remote from each other—Islamic communities, indigenous NGOs, women's groups, and human-rights activists spread out across the Arab world. This decentralization of access to information has at the very least provided fodder for Arab populations to develop opinions more at odds with official positions.

Even in more controlled societies, leaders sway too far from prevailing popular opinion at their own risk and must maintain a precarious balance between authority exerted by monopolizing the legitimate use of force and authority exerted by identifying and realizing the will of the people. With the slow demise of all but a few absolute dictatorships and the global spread of semidemocratic systems, this balance now seems to be shifting towards the latter.

The costs of suppressing the free flow of information are also increasing, as evident in the value international finance and equities markets place on transparency. Even countries like Singapore are struggling to figure out how to push their populations into the information age without giving up their levels of governmental control. But success in such ventures is only becoming more and more difficult.

If decentralized information sources are powering the development of a popular will potentially more at odds with official positions (because it is less dictated by political elites), and if this public opinion will matter more in the development of national policies in states around the world than ever before, then states aspiring to have a global impact must develop tools

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to influence foreign public opinion as refined as the tools that currently exist for interacting with foreign diplomats. And while this has become more important than ever before, it has also become more difficult.

Ironically, foreign public opinion has become harder to influence as once jealously guarded state monopolies on information dissemination to home populations have been broken down by satellite dishes, telephones, faxes, and Internet links in all but the most repressive countries. In Kosovo, for example, where Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic shut down the local radio station and had his forces jam Albanian cross-border television broadcasts, the Kosovar-Albanians became (before their eviction at the hands of Serbian forces) the highest per-capita owners of satellite television in the world, watching what programs they pleased. States like China and Iran, which have both attempted to limit satellite-dish ownership, have had only limited success. Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, all of which initially attempted to limit Internet transmissions, have determined that the benefits of entering the information age outweighed the costs, and have allowed unrestricted access to the Internet. Once perhaps the most important source of information in many parts of the world, government-generated information, such as state television and radio stations, provide a shrinking percentage of content in the global information environment. While the rise of the Internet, the globalization of economic systems, and the internationalization of mass media hardly make states irrelevant, they do challenge the ability of states to define the popular environment in which they work. This has significant implications for foreign-policy activities.

Interstate diplomatic relations, the hallmark of the Westphalian system, though still important, are relatively less so on average than they once were. During the Cold War, for example, government-to-government contact was clearly the most important story in foreign affairs. When Soviet missiles were moved into Cuba, it did not matter what Soviet or Cuban populations thought; all that really mattered were U.S.–Soviet bilateral relations. When President Kennedy and his advisors developed their response strategy, they were determining, in effect, how they would deal with the Soviet leadership. While this approach

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worked in the Cuban missile crisis, the same type of approach will not by itself work to counter effectively terrorism and other transnational threats, which span borders and are fuelled by popular sympathy and ideology as much as by state sponsorship. In a world where governments are increasingly aware and respectful of domestic public opinion, traditional diplomacy, while still important, is only part of the story. Completing the international engagement story now requires doing more to convince foreign populations. In their essay "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye define "soft power" as "the ability to get desired outcomes because others want what you want."[2] The ultimate issue for states, however, is how best to encourage the development of ideas and opinions conducive to the development of such shared interests.

This can be done in many ways, but interacting with a foreign state's diplomats is only one. In the new environment, successful foreign policy requires engaging foreign entities at all levels—governmental and nongovernmental, political, economic, cultural, legal, popular, and so on. Harvard Law professor Anne-Marie Slaughter has written that the ease of direct communications between individuals and groups across borders allows activities previously organized by states to be disaggregated into component parts, which can be spread across multiple locations. According to Slaughter, this disaggregation allows state functions to be reconceptualized as groupings of interlinked activities on a smaller scale, each with the opportunity, via communications and other systems, to interact independently with others engaged in similar functions across the globe.[3] If this is the case, then cross-sectoral contacts—sporting matches, judicial exchanges, international academic programs, and the like—are as much a part of the foreign-policy process as embassy receptions and bilateral conferences. Because foreign policy is becoming increasingly an act of building diverse networks and partnerships, foreign ministries and other traditional actors must expand their working definition of foreign policy. Part of this will include government information campaigns targeted at foreign populations.

To be effective, such campaigns must be based on openness, honesty, and respect for foreign cultures. Credibility and reli-

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ability will be the key assets of effective information campaigns. In a world of ever-expanding access to information, where massive amounts of unfiltered and unverified information vie for attention, misinformation and propaganda will eventually be unmasked and deception will ultimately discredit its progenitors. As the BBC has demonstrated during its sixty years of reliable foreign broadcasting, trust is a powerful tool that can only be gained with time and must be employed with care. Nations or entities that obfuscate and manipulate—that are in the propaganda business rather than the information business—may achieve reasonable short-term success in an environment where information access is limited, but will do increasingly less well as a society opens up to multiple information sources. Although the Saudi attempt at establishing a pan-Arab television station, the Middle East Broadcasting Center, has enjoyed some success, the Saudi station has rapidly been overtaken by Al-Jazeera, the uncensored Qatari station whose tackling of controversial issues in an uncensored manner has infuriated many Arab leaders—and enticed a rapidly growing viewership. The North Koreas of the world can turn off the tap of the information age, but states willing to bear the cost of complete isolation, economic stagnation, and authoritarian control are a dying breed. Yet even the most sophisticated and open states have some catching up to do if they hope to compete successfully in a rapidly transforming international environment.

The world around the nation-state is changing. Democratization, while imperfect and uneven, is making political leaders more accountable to their domestic populations and less able to disregard popular wishes. Even if elections in many former East-bloc states have been far from flawless, their mere existence has initiated a heretofore unprecedented level of public accountability by political leaders. Even more repressive states like Iran have been forced to recognize expressions of popular will, as demonstrated in the surprising rise in influence of President Mohammed Khatami. Information technology adds to this equation by sending news and information directly to populations, allowing those previously less informed to develop strong opinions on a myriad of new issues. Iran may limit the

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private ownership of satellite dishes, but the pooled effect of Internet links, illegal satellite dishes, foreign radio broadcasts, and Western mass media culture has been profound nonetheless.

Across the globe, the Internet and drastically reduced telephone charges have facilitated a much faster movement of ideas and cultural experiences. These technology-based channels have facilitated the development of what law professor Kathryn Sikkink has labeled "transnational issue networks," groups of people separated geographically but linked through common interests or experiences via interactive networks.[4] Human-rights activists in repressive countries, for example, can be (and often are) emboldened by their contacts with human-rights activists in other countries. Such transnational constituencies will continue to develop in the future, and states will be (indeed, are being) forced to deal with them. Corporations and religious groups have long known that courting individual members of foreign societies, counted as consumers, souls, or constituents, matters enormously. States must now learn this lesson.

It is perhaps surprising that this should be the case in the United States, a society that understands intuitively the power of reaching out by means of tailored messages to corporate consumers and political constituents. America's entertainment industry has proliferated to the far corners of the earth; a *Titanic* craze recently swept Iran, and U.S. entertainment exports now amount to over $60 billion a year. U.S. advertising executives have convinced Bulgarians to crave Coke, Thais to adore hamburgers, and even the reluctant French to sport cowboy boots. American news networks like CNN have become the information standard worldwide. All of these developments have engendered both resentment and admiration overseas, but there can be no question that they have gained momentum over the past half century.

In the same period, however, America's foreign-policy establishment has undergone steady but significantly less dynamic change. The U.S. Department of State, with more embassies around the world than any other nation and a distinguished tradition of diplomacy, has mastered government-to-govern-

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ment relations. With notable exceptions, the department is primarily organized around a series of regional offices broken down at their smallest level into country desks, whose primary function is to track and manage U.S. bilateral relations with particular foreign governments. Clearly this is an enormously important task. Crises happen in specific places, so it is essential to have people who understand the conditions of a given geographic area. International diplomatic protocol also often requires that special attention be paid to bilateral relations to prevent dangerous misunderstandings.

In a world of limited resources, however, the question is not whether the United States should pay detailed attention to specific bilateral relations. Instead, it is what proportion of time, money, and energy should be put into each component of foreign policy. How many people should sit at country desks in the State Department compared to the number of people addressing cross-cutting issues like environmental decay, economic crises, and terrorism—questions that do not respect, or often recognize, national boundaries? How much effort should the United States put into relations with other governments compared to efforts to interact directly with foreign populations or with multilateral organizations, or to facilitate nongovernmental contracts between sectors of the United States and foreign societies? What skills should be sought to create a foreign-policy community best able to face the challenges of the next century?

The U.S. government agency primarily responsible for engaging foreign publics is the United States Information Agency, or USIA. Formally established in 1953, USIA defines its primary function as "public diplomacy": engaging foreign populations in a two-way dialogue, which allows the agency to explain U.S. perspectives to these populations and to bring assessments of foreign public opinion to the awareness of U.S. policymakers. But while USIA's ability to gauge and engage international public opinion has developed, its ability to interject this information into the policy process has not kept pace. In part to address this important concern, President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright strongly supported the integration of USIA into the Department of State.

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After a series of false starts, the Foreign Affairs Reorganization and Reform Act of 1998 called for the abolition of USIA as of October 1999, with its public diplomacy functions to be folded into the State Department.

The reorganization of USIA's functions into the State Department has the potential to begin a process of reinvigorating the U.S. foreign-policy establishment by bringing public diplomacy and traditional diplomacy closer together. This could make international information perspectives more central to the foreign-policy process and public diplomacy expertise and tools more accessible to policymakers. Reorganization alone, however, will not take U.S. foreign policy where it needs to go unless it is accompanied by a broader transformation in the way the United States discerns, articulates, and advances its interests overseas, one that recognizes the deep and ongoing transformation of global politics. To engage internationally as effectively as possible in a decentralized world, a shift in foreign-policy focus is needed towards a new vision, a new model, and a new culture.

The new vision must see foreign policy less as an interaction between government elites and more as a multifaceted interaction between *societies*, in which governments, among other actors, play an important role in shaping dialogue and moving towards desired outcomes through diffuse exchanges on a number of levels. This does not mean that governments will not have policies, engage with foreign leaders, move armies, or negotiate international treaties. It does not mean that military power will be any less crucial. Every one of these traditional government functions, however, will need to be developed in consideration of international public opinion and a more broadly defined international context, and presented in a form and manner that utilizes whatever media best reaches the target audiences. Policies will have to be carefully and proactively explained to foreign populations through satellite television and radio, the Internet, and other media using techniques that make the information presented interesting and appealing.

In this environment, creativity is crucial. Because messages will need to be delivered in ways that people are best able to accept, policymakers must understand how to speak these di-

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verse languages. Working with DC Comics, for example, the U.S. government created a comic book on the danger of land mines that was distributed to children in Bosnia and Latin America. And although America's continued criticism of China's human-rights record was regarded with suspicion by much of the Chinese population, similar messages, couched in terms of the Chinese people's desire to shape their own future, were positively received when President Clinton participated in radio talk shows during his visit to China last year. These radio programs may well have nourished the idea of a different political culture. The goal is the same as other human-rights diplomacy, but the approach makes a big difference. Of course, human-rights diplomacy is an essential tool for promoting U.S. values abroad. Bringing about desired outcomes, however, requires parallel activities of multiple forms.

Two models that might appropriately be applied to inform this vision—although both are often anathema to traditional foreign-policy communities—are advertising and political campaigns. For example, Coca-Cola would never imagine simply launching a new soft drink without pretesting or a targeted advertising campaign. Instead, Coke would most likely probe new markets with taste tests and market surveys. Once convinced that the product would be successful, they would launch it with a carefully conceived advertising campaign. Similarly, no U.S. campaign manager hoping to remain employed would allow his or her candidate to put forward a new policy position without first testing the waters through public-opinion polling. A candidate with conviction would still go ahead with an unpopular policy, but at least he or she would do so with knowledge of the terrain. To be most effective in the next century, U.S. foreign policy must be first and foremost well conceived, but it must model itself both in formulation and promulgation along the lines of mass advertising and principled political campaigns.

Methods of gaining cultural insight into foreign cultures and measures of popular attitudes abroad must at least inform the development of foreign policy. To have a positive and predictable impact on foreign publics, U.S. policymakers must get a better sense of what those publics think and how policies will

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be received, even if international public opinion and popular considerations may be overridden by other interests. The United States, through USIA, is the only nation to engage systematically in international public-opinion polling. This polling data as well as other measures of international public opinion and the input of cultural specialists skilled at interpreting such data need to be better integrated into the policy-development process. Modes of presentation for new policies need to be market-tested to determine the most effective ways of communicating such policies and reaching desired outcomes. Once optimal modes of presentation are determined, important policies and actions must be launched with coordinated and creative international information campaigns utilizing all appropriate media—radio, television, the Internet, comic books, cassette tapes, street theater, music, animation, and the like. The effectiveness of these campaigns must be continually monitored, with appropriate shifts and modulations in presentation made accordingly.

Of course, there are limits beyond which persuasion and explanation become cynical manipulation, limits that policymakers must be careful to understand and respect. In many cases, dialogue with foreign populations through interactive television and radio programs will present policies and allow U.S. government officials and others to answer the questions they raise. Much of this is already done domestically by political leaders. It now needs to be developed on the international level.

This is not to say that U.S. foreign policy should be made to conform to international public opinion, that it should lose its principle, soul, or purpose. The substance of foreign policy remains its most crucial component. The United States must and does have something meaningful to sell; it must not then shrink from selling it as well as can be done. Policymakers should be acutely aware of the state of international public opinion, and foreign-policy decisions should give appropriate weight to these issues in relation to other considerations. Like any effective leader, America will sometimes disregard international public opinion to do what U.S. leaders believe to be right. A good leader, however, knows when he or she is bucking public opinion.

When the United States makes internationally unpopular decisions, as (for example) in the case of the land-mines conven-

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tion and the statute of the International Criminal Court, it should try to know as best it can beforehand what the costs of these positions will be in terms of international reaction and long-term credibility. This awareness, in turn, might inspire the U.S. government to reach out earlier in the development of potentially divisive policies to the individuals and groups who influence the public's perceptions, including journalists, religious leaders, and advocacy groups. In the case of land mines, for example, the United States, which had championed the international crusade against these systems, was seen internationally as an opponent of efforts to ban them. Had the U.S. government engaged NGOs earlier and built an alliance against the proliferation of land mines, government-NGO alliances based on the large overlap of interests might have been developed.

Implementing this vision, however, will require a shift in the culture and structure of the U.S. foreign-policy apparatus. From the State Department culture of *demarches* and cables must emerge a more creative environment where individuals with different functional responsibilities and areas of focus work together synergistically to develop integrated approaches to policy challenges. It means that new skills need to be developed among current foreign-policy professionals. They must be trained to reach out to NGOs, the media, and the public—and then be rewarded for doing so effectively. In addition, many types of people need to be brought into the foreign-policy establishment at all levels. Advertising executives, domestic campaign workers, pollsters, sociologists, and others have the advocacy skills the State Department needs and must be tapped to join the ranks of its professionals. In order to attract people with these skills, entry into foreign service for shorter periods of time must be allowed and encouraged. Bureaucratic boundaries between regional offices (and between regional and functional offices) must be overcome to allow a more integrated interaction. The physical space and technology of offices must also be changed, as in software firms around the country, to foster the interrelationships and incessant communication necessary for fully implementing this type of approach in a networked environment. Reward structures for advancement in the diplomatic

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ranks must also be changed to value innovation and creativity in public outreach more highly. Most importantly, the culture of foreign policy must change from one that along with protecting secrets and conducting secret negotiations recognizes that openness—achieved through the development of broad information networks and multiple temporary mini-alliances with both state and nonstate actors—will be the key to foreign-policy success.

Such networks and partnerships will prove crucial in molding the web of popular international perception in which all state action will take place. The United States must not only coordinate with allied states; it must also work with NGOs and a broad array of nonstate actors, including corporations, religious groups, and trade associations. Bosnia is one place where the international community has done this effectively. Working through the Office of the High Representative and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, unified and coordinated messages of peace and reconciliation have been delivered to the Bosnian people. These messages have been amplified by numerous independent media outlets supported and developed by the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as by international NGOs like George Soros's Open Society Institute (OSI). The U.S. government additionally has facilitated program support to the newly established international and local independent television stations in Bosnia by utilizing high-level administration contacts with the entertainment industry.

Direct foreign broadcasts like the Voice of America (VOA) also often play an extremely important role in foreign crises, as VOA did when it rapidly augmented Serbian and Albanian language broadcasts after Yugoslav authorities banned independent newspapers and the rebroadcast of international radio programs in October of 1998. In most cases, however, reliable indigenous broadcasters will be more trusted by local publics than international broadcasters. This places a premium on supporting appropriate local radio and television activities. These independent information providers can proactively affect the development of brewing crises by building a multiplicity of

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voices, having the potential to challenge the misinformation and harmful propaganda that often precede crises. The U.S. government did this effectively through the USIA-produced "Agreement for Peace" program, which broadcast information on the international peace negotiations on Kosovo over Albanian television during the two weeks between the February and March rounds of talks. The program allowed Kosovar journalists to interview key U.S. officials in a live prime-time news program that reached three quarters of the population of Kosovo.

Developing U.S. strategic information capabilities to engage a new constellation of international and inter-entity allies is a challenging task that will require fresh approaches and creative thinking. Facing this challenge will be a defining element of U.S. foreign policy in the next century. Contrary to many predictions of the "information age," the nation-state does not appear to be wilting away. The decentralization and democratization of access to information and the ability to disseminate it widely, however, are changing the dynamic of international relations in fundamental ways. States hoping to retain advantages in traditional areas of power, including military and the economic, must engage this decentralized environment in new and creative ways in order to retain these advantages and develop new synergies between old and new actors. To retain current levels of relevance into the next century, governments must recognize and internalize this transformation.

ENDNOTES

[1]See Jonathan Alterman, "New Media, New Politics: From Satellite Television to the Internet in the Arab World," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Policy Paper 48, Washington, D.C., 1998.

[2]Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77 (5) (September/October 1998): 86.

[3]Anne-Marie Slaughter, "The Real New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 76 (5) (September/October 1997): 183–197.

[4]Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

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*D. Graham Burnett*

# A View from the Bridge: The Two Cultures Debate, Its Legacy, and the History of Science

THE JOB MARKET FOR HISTORIANS OF SCIENCE, while not as bad as in the recent past, has not yet grown so vigorous that one could safely consider saying "no" to much of anything asked in interviews. Hence, when asked recently in a grim voice (before I had taken my seat in the interview stall at the American Historical Association meeting) if I could teach a lecture course on Medieval England, I heard myself, like a voice from afar: "Yes. Yes, I will. Yes!" I suspect my enthusiastic version of Molly Bloom fooled no one, as a glimpse of my curriculum vitae evidenced not the least qualification in this regard.

The small and middle-tier institutions that had advertised an interest in a historian of science had, as it turned out, a variety of ideas about what I might add to their teaching-oriented history programs—a scientific revolutions course, a history of technology class, a class on Darwin. These seemed reasonable to me; I had prepared to show such capacities. However, something else was on the mind of several department heads. An affable chair from a small college in the South told me that the scientist on the committee was quite keen to learn what I would do to improve scientific literacy for non-science majors on campus. Would I be willing to teach science courses for nonscientists? Could I help bridge the "two cultures" divide at his institution?

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I answered, of course, in yet another breathless tumble of affirmatives, but a long evening waiting for callbacks left plenty of time to reflect on the durability of C. P. Snow's formulation and its relationship to the field of history of science. This was not a new reflection, but one tinged with a new irony. My first encounter with Snow's 1959 Rede Lecture, "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution," came at the impressionable age of sixteen, when I found a copy on the shelf of my high-school headmaster. I surveyed the jacket photo of Snow's large and serious face and started in—believing I was making a foray into a major and significant subject, that I was reading a very grown-up book.[1] My understanding of the text at the time had a palpable influence on my decision to pursue the history of science in college, work that led to a graduate fellowship to read for a Ph.D. in the field at Snow's own beloved Cambridge. On one of my first days there, I passed the cobbled walk behind the Senate House (where the Rede Lectures are given) and took it into my head to make my way through Snow again, this time less naively. A term under the supervision of Stefan Collini (who that year had completed a new edition of the "Two Cultures" with a very helpful introduction) gave me a new distaste for the essay—its *ex cathedra* pronouncements, its somewhat self-important anecdotal style—along with a strong sense that it could be held responsible for the perpetuation of many of the ailments in Anglo-American intellectual life that it set out to diagnose.

My purpose in this essay will be to revisit Snow's Rede Lecture of forty years past, and the subsequent disputes—notably a vitriolic rebuttal by F. R. Leavis—that arose around it. Part of my purpose in doing so will be to establish the magnitude and longevity of the public interest in the "Two Cultures" diagnosis. One not infrequently hears academics carp that their work fails to reach that coveted and elusive "broader audience." Snow's lecture had an astoundingly rapid and broad impact on how reading people in Britain and the United States (at least) talked about the relationship between the sciences, on the one hand, and the arts and humanities, on the other. Using a collection of contemporary reviews and essays I will sketch the lineaments of the debates that opened in scholarly and

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semischolarly publications, focusing on early lines of criticism. I will go on to suggest that the legacy of Snow's formulation remains active today in unexpected contexts, where it continues to function as a structure for undermining the significance of a range of nonscientific enterprises. Finally, I want to show what the history of science can contribute to a full account of this original "two cultures debate," while asking at the same time what the history of these debates can tell us about the past and the future of the discipline of history of science.

## SNOW AND THE TWO CULTURES

Suppose one gave a one-hour lecture and left the room having substantially reformulated the way a large number of people describe their past, present, and future. Imagine stepping away from the rostrum having generated a language that would gradually insinuate itself into the way that intellectuals and popular journals alike describe history, current events, and future priorities. This happens infrequently, but it happens. For evidence one need look no further than the Rede Lecture of 1959. There, Charles Percy Snow, Sir Charles, later Lord Snow—a less-than-fully-successful physical chemist turned lauded British novelist and science-policy pundit—offered his listeners a way of talking about intellectual life that would not go away.[2] In the mid-1980s Snow's essay remained on reading lists at more than five hundred universities around the world.[3] Not so long ago, the elusive dark horse of American arts and letters, Thomas Pynchon, dignified Snow with an adjectival coinage: in an essay in the *New York Times* on the New Luddites, Pynchon invoked the specter of what he called the "Snovian Disjunction."[4] It is a disjunction regularly lamented in scholarly symposia, cited by academic administrators, and invoked to help account for everything from the "science wars" to the history of environmental policy.[5] The Rede Lecture cannot be dismissed.

After my juvenescent encounter with the essay, I had a question: What could be done to mend this dreadful fissure in Western thought? After my second pass through the text five years later, I had a new question: How was it that these fifty-

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one pages, "neither original," as one commentator at the time put it bluntly, "nor deep, nor witty, nor closely reasoned," touched off such an extensive and often hot-tempered debate?[6] What distinctive element of "The Two Cultures" has made it—despite the best efforts of many—the most frequently cited articulation of the relationship between science and society, a touchstone for several generations of commentary? Snow claimed to be as stumped as others, writing later that he felt something like the sorcerer's apprentice, having unleashed a torrent of forces far beyond his own powers. Later still he mused regretfully that the lecture had entangled him in a ceaseless cycle of public presentations and defenses—a lecturing life that had distracted him from his literary life, and (he intimated) perhaps cost him the Nobel Prize for literature.[7]

While "The Two Cultures" can indeed be read as a pastiche of earlier arguments about the necessary ascendancy of science—one thinks here of H. G. Wells and J. D. Bernal, among others—Snow's formulation did not merely recapitulate these earlier discussions, but extended them and rendered them timely and solemn by means of an emphasis on the global geopolitical context of different forms of knowledge. The premise of his presentation was this: Snow claimed to have acceded to a vantage point that afforded him a unique perspective on the topography of intellectual life around the world. He put himself forward as a witness to the increasing bifurcation of the world's educated population into two mutually exclusive and noncommunicating "cultures," one scientific and one literary. Asserting that his unusual formation, "by training a scientist, by vocation a writer," had enabled him to watch these two cultures exchange increasingly hostile glares across a divide of mutual incomprehension, Snow went on to catalog the international causes and costs of this intellectual polarization. He left no doubt that, in his view, the burden of responsibility fell heavily on the literary culture.

In what became perhaps the most celebrated passage of the lecture (which quickly became a best-selling short book) Snow described his own amphibious capacity to cross from the physics laboratories of Cambridge to the literary parties of Chelsea, and the frightful things he found in this traverse:

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> A good many times I have been present at gatherings of people who, by the standards of the traditional culture, are thought highly educated and who have with considerable gusto been expressing their incredulity at the illiteracy of scientists. Once or twice I have been provoked and have asked the company how many of them could describe the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The response was cold: it was also negative. Yet I was asking something which is about the scientific equivalent of: *Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?*

The lack of communication between belletrists and scientists—what Snow called the "polarity" of the intellectual life of Britain and America—was not, in his assessment, merely an unfortunate or inevitable effect of increasing specialization. Rather, as Snow wound his way through the remaining three sections of his talk, it became clear that he considered these poles very much charged. At the positive end were the scientists, whose pragmatic concern with getting things done drew them ineluctably to the future, a future they construed with dogged optimism and to which they applied their skills in the interest of material progress; scientists and engineers, Snow famously asserted, "have the future in their bones." At the negative pole huddled the cold spirits of the literary life, who, to paraphrase Fitzgerald (though Snow did not), "beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

What began then as a lamentable division between specialists, and merely that, became on further development nothing less than a full-blown indictment. Not only had literary intellectuals (here standing in for all humanists and artists) been unable to come to terms with the realities of technological and scientific progress—in Snow's view, they merely held their nose and looked the other way during the industrial revolution—but, even worse, their overdeveloped faculties for neurasthenic self-absorption, indeed their collapse into solipsistic commune with their own pain, had led to a literature void of "social hope." In its most extreme forms (and here Snow singled out Yeats, Pound, and Wyndham Lewis) this had led to a literature of the "most imbecile expressions of anti-social feeling." To drive the point home, Snow cited approvingly the disgusted question of one of his well-read physicist friends, who asked, "Nine out of

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ten of those who have dominated literary sensibility in our time—weren't they not only politically silly, but politically wicked? Didn't the influence of all they represent bring Auschwitz that much nearer?"

Little argument could be offered to Lionel Trilling's restrained comment on this aspect of Snow's claim, that "there can be no other interpretation of his lecture than that it takes toward literature a position of extreme antagonism."[8] Had this been all, "The Two Cultures" would have been both less audacious and less interesting. After all, his account of the nineteenth-century literary response to the industrial revolution was manifestly wrong (as a number of contemporary scholars were quick to point out), and his characterization of the navel-gazing of literary artists and critics, while polemical, could hardly be described as particularly original or important. Snow, however, had bigger fish to fry. In his view, this lamentable "literary culture" transcended some isolated community of novelists and dons. In fact, he went on to argue, the spirit of the Luddite literary culture beat at the very heart of the nebulous "traditional culture" of Britain. This "traditional culture" included, in effect, everyone but the scientists: schoolteachers, civil servants, business magnates, and, most distressingly, those in positions of political power.

Having thus expanded the ambit and scale of his two cultures division, Snow the diplomat and policy advisor sketched its global geopolitical context. In the final section of his talk, entitled "The Rich and the Poor," Snow looked out from the Senate House at the world. In the southern hemisphere he saw poverty, disease, and suffering—a world waiting to take the great leap forward, a world waiting to industrialize and take its share of global prosperity. To the east and the west Snow saw two superpowers likely, at the very least, to eclipse Britain's international stature. Worse, the glare of the Cold War and the recent tests of hydrogen bombs suggested that something considerably more urgent than education policy lay at stake. Set on this dramatic stage, the two cultures division—"litero-traditional" versus "techno-scientific"—was something much worse than an unfortunate drain on creativity or an obstacle to truly enlightened high table conversation. Set on this stage, the two cultures division became, for Snow, fatal.

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In somber tones Snow promised that the have-not nations would not long be kept out of the wealth of industrialization. Their modernization would demand capital and technological assistance from wealthy industrialized states, aid that could only be provided by those countries that had educated a surplus of scientists and engineers, and that possessed leaders informed about the scientific world—in other words, countries not suffering from the debilitating effects of an intellectual house divided. The United States and the USSR were producing, Snow asserted, more scientists and engineers; they understood. Britain's educational system needed an overhaul—giving a new priority to techno-scientific education—not merely to save Britain, but because of an urgent and pressing duty to the poor of the world, who needed to become the collaborative project of developed nations. Without a collaborative overseas enterprise, who knew what might become of superpower tensions? Without attention to the poor of the world, a global revolt of the have-nots rumbled on the horizon. "Isn't it time we began?" Snow concluded in a hortatory peroration.

This, then, was the sweeping formulation of Snow's "Two Cultures": a past wherein literature and the traditional intelligentsia had neglected science and technology; a present in which scientific illiteracy was morally culpable and educational reform cried out for urgent attention; and a future where there would be, as Snow put it, "jam" for the underprivileged, and global cooperation to that end. The story presented few wholly new elements, but it linked together an array of issues—some timely, some perennial—in a powerful way. Scholarly antipathies, cultural disjunction, educational anxieties, class resentments, economic development, social responsibility—Snow welded all these into a synthetic diagnosis accompanied by a noble and visionary prescription. There was much more to his lecture than just an observation about how scientists and artists had difficulty chatting.

## THE PUBLIC LIFE OF "THE TWO CULTURES"

When I went to Stefan Collini to ask how Snow had managed to create such a resilient scholarly sound bite, he offered two approaches to a solution. The first, quite rightly, was a reading

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of his own introductory essay on the lecture. There Collini does the important work of situating Snow's lecture in the broader context of political and social change in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The launch of *Sputnik* and the opening of the Cold War, the emerging process of decolonization in Africa, the proliferation of atomic resources—all these events led to a high profile for science; they make it easier to understand how Snow's cocktail of education, economics, technology, and moral duty could have become a cultural incendiary. Collini (like John de la Mothe in his book *C. P. Snow and the Struggle of Modernity*) points to a broader "crisis" in English education in the period and shows that "The Two Cultures" must be read as a contribution to that debate, just as it must be understood as an intervention in the endless and subtle negotiations of class, merit, and entitlement that are the very stuff of English civic life.

Collini's second suggestion pointed me to the archives of the Cambridge University Press, where he had seen a substantial collection of contemporary reviews and commentaries that had been cut out and preserved by the editors and maintained in a set of scrapbooks. For several months that autumn I rode my newly acquired bicycle out Trumpington Road to Brooklands Avenue and then down to the main press building, where I was given a table and a large album with pale green pages stiffened with the dry glue on hundreds of clippings. The archive provided a striking record of the reception given to Snow's lecture and its subsequent printed editions, an archive that made it possible to sketch out the shape and magnitude of public response.

From the very start Snow's statement received remarkable attention. One of the most telling documents in the collection was a transcript of the weekly news broadcast on the BBC European Service the morning after the lecture, where Donald Tyerman, the chief editor of *The Economist*, passed over the Shah of Persia's state visit and municipal elections in London to call Snow's public presentation "the most significant news event of the week."[9] The "quality" press followed suit. The *Observer* claimed that Snow's prescience had revealed a national and international "time of crisis," a theme echoed by another commentator who wrote in *Encounter* that the lecture had "beautifully exposed the basic crisis of our existence."[10] The analysis

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of the split in intellectual life between literary intellectuals and scientists was "brilliant" and "profoundly important," "easily the most important statement on English education" in the better part of a century.[11] From early on, however, the issues were seen to reach beyond Great Britain and English schooling. The southern hemisphere saw itself placed at center stage, and the *Times of Ceylon* and a South African journal cited Snow's argument, praising it for its relevance to industrializing nations. From Puerto Rico to Japan, Israel to Argentina to Ghana, C. P. Snow's characterization of the two cultures and global needs found a forum.

Publication in pamphlet form brought another wave of praise. Snow's identification of the "lamentable division" was lauded as "brilliant" and "important," "shrewd" and "sane."[12] The *Listener* followed up on its original praise, claiming that Snow had opened the "great debate" on science and the cultures of the book, and that "a general agreement" had emerged in English society concerning the importance and veracity of his analysis.[13] The *New Statesman* review accepted Snow's notion of literary Ludditism unmodified and preempted critics by declaring that Snow's historic essay was "not likely to be controverted."[14] Scientific and technical journals reflected, unsurprisingly, a particular enthusiasm: the *Bulletin of the Institute of Physics*, *Physics Today*, the *American Scientist*, and *Nature* all devoted portions of their book-review space to lengthy quotations, accepting Snow's thesis with little criticism or reservation. *Nature* even saw in Snow's prescriptions for scientific progress a call for a "new missionary spirit" in the service of technology.[15] While not all scientific publications followed suit with such unconditional praise (*Scientific American* was a notable exception), in general the scientific press seized on Snow with enthusiasm surpassing that of mainstream journals.

In 1962, when F. R. Leavis delivered his venomous Richmond Lecture entitled "Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow," debates around Snow's thesis came to be subsumed into the "Leavis-Snow controversy." But the Cambridge University Press archive reveals that a number of critical approaches to Snow had emerged between 1959 and 1962. These can be conveniently divided into three groups: first, those arguing that Snow's

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binary division was inadequate in that it overlooked the social sciences or other modes of human inquiry; second, those presenting criticisms of Snow's use of history or his understanding of literature; and third, a set of what might be called "foundational attacks" on the principles (stated or implied) in Snow's essay. Brief examples will serve as a context for understanding the structure of the public debate that preceded Leavis.

Characteristic of the first line of criticism, Asa Briggs, the distinguished historian of modern Britain whose *Age of Improvement* had been published that year, wrote in the *Scientific American* of October 1959 that Snow had left "completely out of the picture" consideration of "the growing territory of the social sciences."[16] The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* concurred, and turned a review of "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution" into a four-page history of the rise of the social sciences, criticizing Snow for his apparent "total ignorance" about that "third culture—that concerned with man in society—in which humanistic and scientific modes of thought are inextricably intertwined."[17] The *Northwest Review* also pointed out that Snow's overly tidy division between the two cultures neglected a large and growing set of intellectual endeavors: "Whether patrons of social hope or not, there are in fact members of a third 'culture' who presume to take as their field of competence a knowledge of human behavior which comprehends the scientific, the literary, the technological, the religious, the rich and the poor—not as separate 'cultures' but as parts of a whole bound together by the intangible web of tradition."[18] Interestingly, Snow proved sensitive to this "third culture" critique. In his 1963 "Second Thoughts," accompanying a republication of the lecture, Snow passed entirely over the substance of Leavis's recent polemic but did claim that the two cultures thesis should be revised to include the "third culture" of social science. Despite accepting this notion, Snow never acknowledged that this "third culture" actually linked his polarized "two cultures" or bridged the perceived gap. Rather, he preferred to see the social sciences as a third island in the atoll of his insular intellectual geography.

Instances of the second line of critique were plentiful. Snow's rather sloppy suggestion that Anglo-American literature had

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done little more than muster "a scream of horror" by way of response to the industrial revolution provoked G. H. Bantock to give his article in the *Listener* of September 1959 that very title. A colleague of Leavis's at Cambridge, Bantock had just completed a study of the fiction of Leopold Hamilton Myers, and this work, along with a more intimate acquaintance with the nineteenth-century English novel, led Bantock to question Snow's appreciation of the complexity of the literary intellectuals' response to industrialization. "At the heart of their discontent," he wrote, "repeated time and time again, and especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, lies a distaste for the assertive will which appears always to accompany the development of technical control over the forces of nature."[19] Bantock even intimated the lines of Leavis's future attack, writing, "My point is that the objections of the literary intellectuals to the trend of events Sir Charles is concerned to further have a long history; moreover they are based ultimately on considerations of psychic and spiritual health."

Foundational attacks focused on the ethical postulates of Snow's lecture and accused him of being unclear on, or naive to, the ethical principles of his own argument. Such critiques charged him with making claims about happiness, human goods, and moral responsibility without laying appropriate groundwork for such claims. In general, commentators using this approach tried to bring to light the ethical dimensions of what was perceived to be Snow's thinly veiled scientism, and they called on Snow to provide an explanation of what he called "the moral component right in the grain of science itself." For those who adopted this line of criticism, the two cultures debate was really a debate over the moral high ground, a debate about what kind of human knowledge and intellect deserved precedence in addressing human well-being. The earliest critique of Snow fitting this description saw publication in August of 1959 in the *Spectator*, the same journal that would later publish Leavis's controversial Richmond Lecture. In this review, the philosopher of aesthetics Richard Wollheim called into question the deep commitments driving Snow's claims about the need for increased cultural assimilation of science. Given the unavoidable risks and cost of incorporating a technocracy into liberal

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political theory, Wollheim asked what fundamental doctrines could justify Snow's advocacy. While Wollheim suggested some that might (for instance, the pursuit of a pure meritocracy), he expressed concern that Snow never made clear which ones he considered valid: "The trouble with the lecture is that it is written absolutely outside any theory of man or culture, and it is this philosophical deficiency that gives it a biscuit-like dryness and places it at quite the opposite end of a scale from discussions of the same matter by Mill or Newman."[20]

Other critics pursued this line in questioning the soundness of Snow's plea for educational reform. What did Snow consider the "purpose" of education? Unless that stood clearly articulated, plans for educational reform could never be sound or systematic.[21] Refusing to accept scientific "progress" as its own justification, several commentators went on to question the right of science to lead itself in the name of social progress.[22] As K. W. Blythe wrote in the *Cambridge Review* in November of 1959, "As long as the question is 'how?' the scientist is supreme; when he has answered it, the question becomes 'which?' and the answer is looked for elsewhere."[23] In a complex essay published in *Encounter* in September of 1959, the historian and philosopher of science Michael Polanyi called attention to the pitfalls of the attempt to coax from "scientific rationalism" anything like a moral agency:

> Yet it would be easy to show that the principles of scientific rationalism are strictly speaking non-sensical. No human mind can function without accepting authority, custom and tradition. . . . Empirical induction, strictly applied, can yield no knowledge at all and is a meaningless ideal. . . . And as to the naturalistic explanation of morality, it must ignore, and so by implication deny, the very existence of human responsibility. It is too absurd.[24]

On this line of argument (splaying Snow on the tines of Hume's fork), scientific investigation could never provide a "moral organ," nor could its epistemology fairly be claimed to be inherently ethical in any important way. Perhaps the most concise articulation of this foundational critique can be found in a discussion of the two cultures held by the Philosophy of

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Sciences group of the Newman Association of Great Britain. In the first sentence of this commentary, Snow is challenged for having brought forward a "criticism" of both the scientific and literary communities without providing the "ideal or ideals which such criticism implies."[25]

## F. R. LEAVIS: FROM PUBLIC DEBATE TO PUBLIC CONTROVERSY

The Columbia University library holds a copy of the 1963 American edition of the Leavis essay "Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow." A carefully penciled marginalia greets the reader at the top of the first page: "Gentle reader, you are approaching the most virulent, petty, feculent string of ad hominems ever produced by internecine British snobbery. Forewarned!" One doubts it is Lionel Trilling's hand, but it accurately reflects his assessment of the piece.[26]

Leavis was a curious figure. As a literary critic of immense authority, he could legitimately claim to have been (in important ways) the herald of Eliot, Conrad, and Lawrence. His journal, *Scrutiny*, maintained a scowling outsider's perspective on the academic life of Cambridge even as it significantly reshaped the study of English literature in Britain as a whole. Unswerving in his Arnoldian quest to make the study of literature the "criticism of life," Leavis presided over a faithful coterie of like-minded critics who treated the life of letters as something of a calling: a spiritual devotion in which initiates plumbed the vital essence of humanity by the close and continuous reading of literature. No portrait of this luminously puritanical man rivals the *eloge* written by George Steiner in 1963, the year of Leavis's retirement.[27] There and elsewhere the Richmond Lecture was recalled as a sad testimony to the dark shadow of vituperation that lengthened over Leavis's criticism in his later years.

Having devoted much of his professional life to articulating a vision of literature as a salvific force, standing in opposition to the spiritual and personal decay of postindustrial civilization, Leavis found Snow's optimistic scientism a testament to the bleak condition of intellectual life. His irascible sensibilities enraged by what he saw as largely favorable public response,

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Leavis created in his rebuttal something like a catalog of withering slights, beginning with the opener, in which he notes of Snow's tone that "while only genius could justify it, one cannot readily think of genius adopting it." Needless to say, Leavis assessed Snow as being considerably below the rank of genius, asserting that he was "as intellectually undistinguished as it is possible to be." And, from Leavis's perspective, it was this that made treating the argument of the "Two Cultures" a tricky business: "The intellectual nullity is what constitutes any difficulty there may be in dealing with Snow's panoptic pseudo-cogencies, his parade of a thesis: a mind to be argued with—that is not there."

This being the case, Leavis argued that he had no choice but to treat Snow and his essay less as subject than as omen, a "portent" of the world to come. Leavis used the term, in one form or another, no fewer than eight times as he sputtered incredulously at the popular reception "The Two Cultures" received. For Leavis, the whole affair—Snow's rise to the status of sage and social prophet, the praise greeting his novels, the ubiquity of "The Two Cultures" on sixth-form reading lists—had to be treated as a sign of the deep illness of the body politic. This approach heralded Leavis's blisteringly personal attack on Snow, which, cleverly, Leavis could deny had any personal aim at all: Snow, after all, was merely a symptom, not even conscious of his own inanity. Few were fooled by comments such as, "Snow is, of course, a—no, I can't say that; he isn't: Snow thinks of himself as a novelist," followed by, "As a novelist he doesn't exist; he doesn't begin to exist. He can't be said to know what a novel is." While these may have proved not entirely inaccurate assessments of Snow's literary work (Leavis stated baldly that Snow's novels would not last), they were deemed beyond the pale of cultured debate about the two cultures.

Published in the *Spectator* on March 9, 1962, Leavis's lecture was greeted the following week by a storm of seventeen angry letters, all condemning him and particularly his tone. The published letters (a small portion of those received) came from a variety of notables, but they shared a general dismissive distaste for Leavis's outburst. "I read to the end of this attack because I could not make out what it was all about or why Dr.

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Leavis wrote it," wrote Dame Edith Sitwell archly, and Leavis was charged throughout with jealousy, bitterness, gossip, and spleen. Lord Boothby called Leavis's "breed" a "canker," and even Stephen Toulmin accused Leavis of "illogic so gross" that it "amounts to an abuse of language," consigning him to the "Dark Ages." "Laughable," "ill-mannered, self-centered and adolescent," "destructive," full of "insincerity, incapacity and envy"—such was the language used by those who rose to Snow's defense.

When Alan Sokal published his hoax article in *Social Text* in 1996, it was disheartening to watch how quickly an opportunity for serious discussion of substantive disagreements about science and society degenerated into a scandal over scholarly manners. Something quite similar happened to the two cultures debates in the wake of Leavis's contribution.[28] Pious condemnations of Leavis's tone stood in for a serious engagement with the substance of his attack on "The Two Cultures." Substance there was. Read in the context of the pre-1962 criticisms of Snow, "The Two Cultures? The Significance of Lord Snow" can be understood as a potent hybrid of what I identified as the second and third types of critique: on the one hand, Leavis argued forcefully that Snow had misunderstood the history and significance of literary life; at the same time, Leavis offered a devastating attack on Snow's lack of philosophical rigor.

In searching for the ethical foundation for what he calls a naive, unconscious, and irresponsible argument making claims about human goods, Leavis found nothing but a "portentous" confounding of "standard of living" and "quality of life." Snow's avuncular shorthand for human goods, "jam," betrayed him. For Leavis, anchoring "social hope" in "jam" represented the most barbarous neo-Wellsianism. "It is a confusion," he wrote, "to which all creative writers are tacit enemies." If Snow truly understood the "individual tragedy" of solitude and death (as he explicitly claimed), how did he propose to transcend it and buy "social hope" with material goods? The confusion of "jam" with "salvation" represented the "terrifying distortion and falsification" of the reality of the human experience, a malady not only beyond reparation by the benefices of science and technology but, in fact, one that traced its etiology to the very ethos of

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production that arose out of Snow's precious "industrial revolution."

Having thus called on a Ruskin-like argument to undermine the organizing principle of "The Two Cultures," Leavis turned to a moving defense of literature. Neither science nor technology, he argued, would ever bridge the gap between the individual and society; neither could help the soul escape from the "individual tragedy" of solitude. For Leavis, only language and its heart, literature, allowed human beings to be more than themselves. Through the community of readers, through a "necessary faith" in the process of reading, it became possible, in his view, to move into a "third realm," an intellectual space neither entirely personal nor entirely "public." In the dialogue of reading and in the conversation of criticism, readers craft a "cultural community or consciousness" that serves as the base of ethical life. Leavis caught the essence of this process in two potent phrases: gathered over a text, two readers ask, "This is so, isn't it?" and answer one another again and again, "Yes, but. . . ." For Leavis this process represented the only hope for humanity.

## THE TWO CULTURES AND THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

How old is the two cultures debate? By tweaking the terms of the argument its genealogy can be extended nearly indefinitely. Among the most certain lineal ancestors of the Leavis-Snow controversy are the shadow debates of T. H. Huxley and Matthew Arnold in the late 1870s and early 1880s. Huxley's "Science and Culture" called for the culture of the book to yield up its stranglehold on the university, calling science a new and ascendant "criticism of life" that had rendered the traditional modes of humanistic inquiry (here Erasmus got trucked in, only to be dismissed) obsolete. Arnold's rejoinder, "Literature and Science," was itself a Rede Lecture in the year 1882. Arnold granted that science could rightfully claim a more significant place in education, but he strenuously denied that literature and the arts served merely as ornament, insisting instead that the humanistic enterprises would become only more vital as the innovations of technology and science increasingly transformed

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what individuals had long held true about themselves and the world. It would be the special purview of the humanities and arts "to exercise the power of relating the modern results of natural science to man's instinct for conduct, his instinct for beauty."[29] Herein, certainly, lies the model for Leavis's similar conclusion: "The advance of science and technology means a human future of change so rapid and of such kinds . . . that mankind—and this is surely clear—will need to be in full intelligent possession of its full humanity."[30] This early debate set the terms in other ways as well. In Arnold's challenge to the scientists of his day—he noted that he had met people who thought themselves educated who could not construe a climactic line from *Macbeth*—one hears the forerunner of Snow's one-liner on the Second Law of Thermodynamics: "I was asking something which is about the scientific equivalent of: *Have you read a work of Shakespeare's?*"

Earlier antecedents present themselves: the two cultures debates of the 1950s and 1960s represent a particularly mid-twentieth-century version not merely of the romantic versus the utilitarian but of the early Enlightenment contest of the ancients versus the moderns as well. The primordial "two cultures," to push back still farther, were not the *humanities* and the *sciences* but rather the *humanities* and the *divinities*; not until Bacon's *Great Instauration* and the early seventeenth century would "Natural Philosophy" be thrust into the midst of the more traditional division.[31] It has been put forward that the absolutely aboriginal two cultures division can be traced all the way back to the thirteenth century, during which manuscripts of Euclid's *Elements* became widely available in Latin, separating mathematical adepts from other readers and establishing the rift between the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*.[32] There lie superb clues to the depreciation of the linguistic arts in the etymological links between *trivium* (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and *trivial* (of no consequence).[33] Who is to say that the fissure does not take rise still farther back, in the distinction between the banausic and liberal occupations familiar to the Greeks?[34]

Many historians of science would argue that this game of pushing the roots of the "binary economy" of science and the humanities/arts back in time cannot begin to be truly interesting

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unless accompanied by the detailed work of historicizing the categories themselves.[35] Some of Peter Galison's work, for instance, asks how scientists in different places and at different times have argued for the "unity" of their enterprise. Given the heterogeneity of the sciences, how did the "culture" of science come to identify itself as one and argue, against considerable odds, for the (anagogical? analytical?) convergence of profoundly diverse scientific inquiries?[36] Another approach might be to ask, as Lorraine Daston and others do, how the "artistic" virtues of imagination and intuition came to be juxtaposed with proper operations of the scientific method, and in answering this begin to explain how scientific "facts" came to be defined in opposition to texts and artifacts.[37] Still other scholars have taken on the story of the late Enlightenment split between the *Geistwissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften* in considerable detail.[38] For historians of science, the question of how science came to define itself—and particularly how that process of definition proceeded by the invocation of binary oppositions with other forms of knowledge—does not just constitute a central problem. In some sense it is *the* problem, for to answer it is to say nothing less than how science got to be what it is.

This historicized two cultures, however, was not what the search committee from that small liberal arts college had in mind when they brought the subject up. Rather, they envisioned me, in my capacity as a historian of science, "bridging" the disciplinary divisions in the strictly Snovian sense—I was to address the obvious and immediate problem that English majors could say nothing suitably respectful about the Second Law of Thermodynamics. They gave away their wholly synchronic sense of the term when they set "bridging the two cultures" right next to "increasing science literacy [sic]" in their checklist of interests. I think all working historians of science would agree that our discipline does not currently strive to be a conduit between science and the humanities. Interestingly, however, the modern origins of the discipline lie in precisely that project. In fact, Snow's seemingly distinctive formulation of the two cultures problem—the threat of imminent global tragedy as a result of the noncommunication between scientists and other intellectuals—saw precise articulation thirty years earlier, in a

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book by the founding father of history of science as a discipline in the United States, George Sarton. In *The History of Science and the New Humanism*, based on lectures given at Brown University in 1930, Sarton wrote, "The most ominous conflict of our time is the difference of opinion between men of letters, historians, philosophers, the so-called humanists, on the one side, and scientists on the other."[39] For him, the only hope lay in the very field he pioneered: "Between the old humanists and the scientist, there is but one bridge, the history of science, and the construction of that bridge is the main cultural need of our time." The history of science in the United States, then, emerged specifically to span the perceived two cultures division and to ameliorate its pernicious effects.

Recalling my original mandate, I wish to see what a historian of science can offer by way of a bridge linking the pugnacious oppositions of the two cultures debate proper, the Leavis-Snow controversy.[40] Attention to the historical entanglements of science and culture can indeed show deep links between the most disparate (even self-consciously antithetical) modes of knowing and making. Snow bemoaned that he could not find a nonscientist who could explain the Second Law of Thermodynamics; Leavis dismissed any comparison between the laws of thermodynamics and the sacred sphere of literature as "a cheap journalistic infelicity." For the historian of science a double irony binds these claims. The Second Law of Thermodynamics, articulated in different forms from the 1850s forward by Lord Kelvin (William Thompson) and Claussius (Rudolf Gottlieb), states that while energy is conserved, entropy (or disorder) appears to be constantly increasing in the universe.[41] The implications—that energy tends to disperse, that the universe appears headed for maximum entropy or "heat-death"—gradually came to be understood as a frigid challenge to late Victorian progressivism. Popular journals depicted in images and words the last hours of civilization shivering in the cold sleet of an expiring solar system; the question of the ancients about whether the world would end in fire or flood had been superseded by a proof: it would end under solid ice. Wrote Joseph Conrad of the import of the Second Law, "If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improve-

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ment you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence."[42] Physicists cited Tennyson ("What hope of answer or redress?") as they drove home the point that the earth seemed to be headed for a frozen end.[43] Not only has recent work on the history of thermodynamics traced an elaborate story of the impact of the Second Law on late-nineteenth-century British popular religion, but several scholars have shown clear links between the pessimism the Second Law engendered and the movement of the decadent writers in France and Britain.[44] The very decay Snow decried in the moral fiber of literary culture, it turns out, cannot be fully understood without reference to the history of his own beloved Second Law.

At the same time, to read Leavis dismiss the Second Law with a wave and then, right in the midst of his anti-Snow polemic, turn to a reading of Conrad's *The Shadow Line* is, in light of that author's own reflections, no less ironic.[45] In this compressed and disturbing "confession" Conrad transforms the tropics into the entropics—a young captain sits indefinitely becalmed at his first command, a tableau starkly rendering the dissolution that attends the subsidence of useable energy. *The Shadow Line*, which Leavis brought forward as a self-evident proof of the irrelevance of the Second Law, would be better read as a parable of its broad cultural significance. For all the power of Leavis's description of the collaborative process of reading, it required of him a particular kind of shortsightedness not to realize that the constitutive dialogue on which he grounded our humanity, "It is this, isn't it . . ." followed by "Yes, but . . . ," has occurred not merely standing before poems but standing before the natural world as well, where it has been and continues to be no less significant. To show this will always be the object of the history of science.

## CONCLUSION

When I arrived at Columbia to take up my postdoctoral position in the Society of Fellows in the Humanities, my office was empty, with a single exception. On the desk lay a copy of the university's research broadsheet, *21st C*. The issue that welcomed me featured a focus on "the sciences and the humani-

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ties," and, taking it up with interest, I discovered a set of essays written by people on and off campus discussing different interdisciplinary projects that cut across the "Snovian Disjunction." The editors' leader, however, raised an eyebrow: after suggesting that the sciences and the humanities have long danced an "uneasy *pas de deux* with neither partner consistently leading," they infelicitously rephrased the issue as a showdown between reason and the irrational. The issue of which culture will dominate in the twenty-first century, I read on, comes down to whether we pursue an "Age of Logic or an Age of Luddites." How, one might well ask, did literary culture—in paragraph one hand in hand with science—come by paragraph three to be the dark path to atavistic illogic?

Here, I fear, the editors have followed their Snow too closely. My sketch of the structure of "The Two Cultures" should suggest a precedent for precisely this trajectory: first a division, then a more-or-less veiled indictment, then a discursive plea concerning our urgent future. What I am suggesting is that in very real ways the formulation of "The Two Cultures" still carries much of the baggage of its original context; it continues to do a kind of work for those who deploy it, a work not at all well disposed to humanistic inquiry. Lest it be thought that an obscure university publication makes a weak test case, one need look no further than a recent (and very well received) book by one of the most respected scientists in America, E. O. Wilson.

Wilson's *Consilience*, published last year and widely excerpted in a number of journals, returns to an early-nineteenth-century neologism (the coinage of William Whewell) to express the author's optimistic program: with luck and hard work the sciences, social sciences, and even the humanities and arts should begin to "jump together" and gradually become integrated in content and method. This is no small claim, and it proceeds from a man of great ability and considerable sensitivity—to nature, to our responsibilities to the earth and one another. Nevertheless, the argument has the distinct flavor of Snow: Wilson locates the split between reason and antireason in the early romantic period, and he footnotes Snow when he says it was then that the literary and scientific cultures ceased commu-

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nicating.[46] Moreover, he recapitulates the central structure of Snow's argument, emphasizing the two cultures disjunction, assimilating the nonscientific to the nonrational, and then invoking imminent crisis (in this case ecological) as part of an exhortation for a new and vast extension of the domain of science. Wilson wants to "bridge" the two cultures by an investigation of how culture and biology interact. He writes, "[The two cultures] can be stated as a problem to be solved, the central problem of the social sciences and the humanities, and simultaneously one of the great remaining problems of the natural sciences."[47] Here is a kind of bridge one might eye with suspicion, for the message comes through clearly: the humanities and social sciences represent science's last frontier. Let us build a bridge, he effectively proposes, and take over your island.

Caricature, Wilson might claim, and I would not dispute it. His own sense of the sophisticated interdisciplinary work to be done in advancing sociobiology might belie my suggestion that he advocates scientific solutions to the "problem" of human culture. Put this aside. It remains clear that Snow's formulation is very much with us, and that attention to the history of the two cultures debates casts considerable light on its active legacy. In addition, it remains clear from my job interviews that "bridging the two cultures" and "teaching science courses for nonscientists" are synonymous enterprises for a fair number of people in the broader academic community, some of whom also think this the function of a historian of science.

Is the answer, then, to raise the ramparts? Certainly not. Nor should I be interpreted as advocating ignorance of science. The lessons to be drawn from these observations include a wariness of the irenic tropes that often crop up in discussions of the two cultures: bridges over the fissure, fertile zones on the disciplinary margin, the terra incognita of interdisciplinary work. Bridges are not common ground; fertile marginal zones are still marginal. In seeking evidence of promising changes in how these matters are addressed, one might point to two issues of *Dædalus*. In 1965, as the debates around the two cultures degenerated into reciprocal pastiche, Gerald Holton dedicated an issue of *Dædalus* to "Science and Culture: A Study of Cohesive and

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Disjunctive Forces," with essays by such luminaries as Margaret Mead, Herbert Marcuse, and Talcott Parsons; scientists that wrote included Harvey Brooks and René Dubos, and James Ackerman and Harry Levin were among the humanists involved. Last year *Dædalus* revisited some of the questions in a volume under a slightly (but significantly) different title: instead of Science *and* Culture the volume was called Science *in* Culture.

Science is indeed *in* culture, just as it is *in* history. If I had it to do again, I would answer the chair like this: I can, in a sense, ameliorate the split between the "two cultures" on your campus. If you put me in a classroom I will try to tell the story of their coming to be, the reverse story of their erasure. Whether this will help depends on what you have in mind.

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Josi Dixon and Chris Wright at Cambridge University Press facilitated this work, and I thank them. Thanks also go to Stefan Collini, Simon Schaffer, Christina Burnett, and to those who commented on earlier versions of this paper in presentations at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge; the Society of Fellows and the Society of Senior Scholars, Columbia University; and the Program in Liberal Studies, Notre Dame University.

ENDNOTES

[1]I will refer to the lecture and the printed versions of this piece by the more common short title "The Two Cultures." The printed version saw a number of changes from the original lecture; and later printed versions saw additional slight revisions. No variorum edition exists. For a discussion see John de la Mothe, C. P. *Snow and the Struggle of Modernity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 49, especially n. 4 and 5. I have used C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Canto], 1993).

[2]On Snow's scientific career, see J. C. D. Brand, "The Scientific Papers of C. P. Snow," *History of Science* XXVI (1988): 111–127. Twayne's English Authors Series (TEAS) provides a useful volume for an introduction to Snow's literary oeuvre: David Shusterman, C. *P. Snow*, rev. ed. (Boston: Twayne, 1991). For the relationship between his "two lives" see Nora Calhoun Graves, *The Two Culture Theory in C. P. Snow's Novels* (Hattiesburg: The University and College Press of Mississippi, 1971); or (for the opposite con-

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clusions) Nail Bezel, "Autobiography and 'The Two Cultures' in the Novels of C. P. Snow," *Annals of Science* 32 (1975): 555–571.

[3]De la Mothe, *C. P. Snow and the Struggle for Modernity*, 51.

[4]*New York Times Book Review*, 28 October 1984, 1.

[5]For instance, see references in Andrew Ross, ed., *Science Wars* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). On a recent use of the "Two Cultures" idea to explain certain dimensions of environmental policy in the United States, see Leo Marx, "The Environment and the Two Cultures Divide," in *Science, Technology, and the Environment*, ed. James Fleming and Henry Gemery (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1994). Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison cite Snow as a salient instance of the assumed "binary economy" of art and science. See Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison, eds., *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (New York: Routledge, 1998), introduction.

[6]The quotes are from *Blackfriars*, May 1964. Leo Marx describes much the same reaction in "The Environment and the Two Cultures Divide,"10 n. 5.

[7]De la Mothe, *C. P Snow and the Struggle of Modernity*, 51.

[8]Lionel Trilling, "Science, Literature & Culture: A Comment on the Leavis-Snow Controversy," *Commentary* (June 1962): 464.

[9]BBC transcript in Cambridge University Press archives.

[10]*Observer*, 24 May 1959; *Encounter*, August 1959.

[11]*Encounter* and elsewhere; *Listener*, September 1959.

[12]*Observer*, 24 May 1959.

[13]*Listener*, September 1959.

[14]*New Statesman*, 6 June 1959.

[15]Review in *Nature*, Snow document collection at Cambridge University Press, n.d.

[16]*Scientific American*, October 1959.

[17]*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, October 1961.

[18]*Northwest Review*, July 1960.

[19]*Listener*, 17 September 1959.

[20]*Spectator*, 7 August 1959.

[21]See Michael Yudkin, "Sir Charles Snow's Rede Lecture," *Cambridge Review*, 1960. This was republished in the 1963 Random House volume containing Leavis's lecture, F. R. Leavis, *Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow. Being the Richmond Lecture, 1962* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963).

[22]*Monthly Labor Review*, October 1960.

[23]*Cambridge Review*, 21 November 1959.

[24]Michael Polanyi, "The Two Cultures," *Encounter* 13 (September 1959): 62.

[25]*Philosophy of Sciences Group*, The Newman Society, January 1960.

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[26]The doyen of literary studies at Columbia wrote, "A lively young person of advanced tastes would surely say that if ever two men were committed to England, Home, and Duty, they are Leavis and Snow—he would say that in this they are as alike as two squares." Trilling, "Science, Literature & Culture," n. 8.

[27]This is reproduced in David Lodge, *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (London: Longman, 1972).

[28]A number of responses to the Richmond Lecture were collected in *Cultures in Conflict: Perspectives on the Snow-Leavis Controversy*, ed. David K. Cornelius and Edwin St. Vincent (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964).

[29]*The Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Macmillan, 1903–1904), vol. IV, 340–341.

[30]Leavis, *Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow*, 46.

[31]See the *Oxford English Dictionary* under "Humanities" for a sample chronology of uses.

[32]Lynn White, Jr., "Science and the Sense of Self: The Medieval Background of a Modern Confrontation," *Dædalus* 107 (2) (Spring 1978): 54.

[33]This point is made by Leo Marx in "The Environment and the Two Cultures Divide," 12–13 n. 5.

[34]Ibid., 12.

[35]I am borrowing the terms "binary economy" from Jones and Galison, eds., *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, 2–8 n. 5.

[36]Peter Galison, "The Americanization of Unity," *Dædalus* 127 (1) (Winter 1998). See also the essays in Peter Galison and David Stump, eds., *The Disunity of Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[37]Lorraine Daston, "Fear and Loathing of the Imagination in Science," *Dædalus* 127 (1) (Winter 1998).

[38]Peter Hanns Reill, "Science and the Construction of the Cultural Sciences in Late Enlightenment Germany: The Case of Wilhelm Von Humboldt," *History and Theory* (33) (1996): 345–366.

[39]Cited in Loren Graham, "History of Science in the University Curriculum," in *Scientific Education and Humane Values*, Seminar Reports 4, Spring 1975, Columbia University.

[40]This is in keeping with the vision of several commentators at the time: reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement, Blackfriars*, and several other sources drew attention to history of science as a discipline that defied Snow's polarization and that was reshaping social understanding of science.

[41]Those not expert in physics may now develop some appreciation for the intricacies of thermodynamics by consulting one of the volumes in the *Scientific American Library*: P. W. Atkins, *The Second Law* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1984). Those prepared to do the math may consult C. Truesdell, *The Tragicomical History of Thermodynamics 1822–1854* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1980).

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[42]Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 66.

[43]See Greg Meyer, "Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophecy," in *Energy and Entropy*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 327.

[44]A good starting place for the (extensive) literature on thermodynamics and religion is Erwin N. Hiebert, "The Uses and Abuses of Thermodynamics in Religion," *Dædalus* 95 (4) (Fall 1966): 1046–1081. More recently, see Bruce Clarke, "Allegories of Victorian Thermodynamics," *Configurations* (4.1) (1996): 67–90. On the link to decadent literature and art, see Stephen Brush, *The Temperature of History: Phases of Science and Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: B. Franklin, 1978); Meyer, "Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophecy," 312–313 n. 44; and Bruce Clarke, *Energy Forms: Allegory and Science in the Era of Classical Thermodynamics, 1850–1930* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).

[45]Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow Line: A Confession* (New York: Doubleday, 1917). The novella was first serialized in the *Metropolitan Magazine* and subsequently appeared in the *English Review* (seven parts, September 1916 to March 1917).

[46]E. O. Wilson, *Consilience* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 40.

[47]Ibid., 126.

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